APRIL
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THE ® saint DETECTIVE MAGAZINE

ICD

Edited by LESLIE CHARTERIS

A Man's Foes
by PEARL BUCK

Limehouse Rhapsody
by SAX ROHMER

Army of the Shadows
by ERIC AMBLER

Fatal Ruby
by R. AUSTIN FREEMAN

The Old Routine
by LESLIE CHARTERIS

APPOINTMENT WITH DEATH

A NEW STORY by LAWRENCE G. BLOCHMAN

SOME OLD, SOME NEW — THE FINEST IN MYSTERY FICTION

A KING-SIZE PUBLICATION

ALL MONTH our mail box was clogged with more nominations of St. Dismas than I can list in this space, from as far apart as Gordon Stevens of Anchorage, Alaska, to a 91-year-young fan actually named Lillian Charteris (and no relation)—from Karen, wife of master SF-writer Poul Anderson, to the Rev. John O'Toole, who by an almost unbearably felicitous happenstance is attached to the Diocese of Crookston, Minn.

But last month I promised you another more startling candidate for the patron saint of thieves. This one was first offered me by the Rev. Kenneth Mitchell of St. Louis, Mo., who also named St. Dismas, but went on: *"The second is (hold on to your moustache!) St. Nicholas! None other than jolly old Santa Claus. . . .*

I was still feeling slightly dubious when he was seconded by Bruce Pelz of Gainesville, Fla., Margaret B. Logan of San Francisco, and a possibly cynical Charles E. Bingham of Newton, N. J., who added, *"You have but to consider what the commercialists have made of the holy season."* But I was promptly nailed by B. J. Seligman of Detroit with a page torn straight from Ripley's 1946 BELIEVE IT OR NOT, which boldly calls Santa *"the patron saint and protector of many shady vocations. . . . The 'Knights of St. Nicholas' is another name for the light-fingered gentry. . . . Pirates emblazoned his likeness on their flags."* And the clincher came from Russell F. W. Smith, Associate Dean of New York University and an editor of the NEW WONDER WORLD ENCYCLOPEDIA, no less, who quoted from it: *"Because he was supposed to have made some thieves return their booty, he was supposed to be the patron saint of thieves."*

Finally, André Lamy of New York, eruditely mentioning a 12th-century French play on this theme, gives what seems the perfect summing-up for this debate: *"I suggest it would be in accordance with the usual behavior of Mr. Simon Templar, who makes scoundrels disgorge their ill-gotten gains even if he does so by rather unorthodox methods."*

Which leaves me practically no room to boast about an unusually brilliant issue which ranges even farther than our correspondents, from India (with Lawrence Blochman in the Royal Howdah) to Switzerland (Eric Ambler), and from China (Pearl Buck—who else?) to London, where R. Austin Freeman may show you why some connoisseurs rate Dr. Thorndyke as great a literary milestone as Sherlock Holmes. It seems dreadfully dull to admit that the Saint, this month, is only in Chicago.

Leslie Charteris

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appointment with death

by...Lawrence G. Blochman

Even brief possession of the diamonds had meant death for previous owners. Very likely this man would likewise die.

SOME people said that Cole had gone native, but it wasn't quite true. It was a fact that something of India, some of the indolent calm of four thousand years of passive philosophy, seemed to seep through the water-splashed mats of cocoanut fiber that kept most of the heat of the day and the strange sounds of oriental streets from penetrating the editorial windows of the Allahabad *Vanguard*. Something of India seemed to have seeped into Cole's very being. Otherwise he would have long ago done something about himself and his low estate.

Cole shared a large, funereal room with five-Anglo-Indian subeditors and two Bengali translators.

Even though Cole was an Occidental, he was properly isolated from the Kiplingesque dignity of the two other foreign journalists who sat in high-ceilinged private rooms, wrote their copy in long-hand so as not to taint their art with the clatter of newfangled typewriters, and continued to act their imagined roles as bearers of the Imperial burden although the curtain had gone down

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Lawrence G. Blochman knows both Europe and Asia, not as a tourist but as a man who has lived and worked in the countries he writes about. When he therefore writes about Paris — or Allahabad — it is from on-the-spot knowledge of France — or India — as they are, in these days....

---

on the pantomime of empire these many years.

Cole, after all, was perennially in need of a haircut, his white ducks were frayed at the seams and in dire need of laundering, and his shoes, in another month or so, would be worn down to spats. When sober, Cole was a clever journalist, a witty writer, and a sharp thinker. But he was not a *pukkah sahib*. He ranked socially with the country-born and therefore did his work in the common office where electric punkahs turned listlessly overhead, where red-turbaned copy boys sprawled against the copy chute, and a metallic tinkling from the floor below told of Indian compositors setting type, letter for letter, in a language of which they understood not a word.

Cole sat with his back to the door, so that he did not see the entrance of the big, bull-necked, wide-shouldered, jet-propelled character whose straw hat and bright tweed clothing branded him as a stranger to the tropics. The visitor hesitated at the threshold, obviously puzzled by the air of sleepy languor hanging over what should have been a briskly bustling newspaper office. When the newcomer's eyes picked up the sensitive though somewhat dissipated profile of the one Occidental in the room, he uttered a roar:

"Cole! Why, you son-of-a-cross-eyed Airdale! You old buzzard, you!"

Cole jumped up so suddenly that he knocked over his chair. His face was chalky white as he stared open-mouthed at the big man in the doorway. He had jumped because nobody had called him Cole since he began telling people his name was Andrews, some years earlier. And he had paled because he recognized the newcomer as a Californian who had been detective-sergeant of the Oakland police force—when his own name *had* still been Cole.

"Hello, Francis X. Fogarty," Cole said, trying to be casual.

"Cole, you old such-of-a-which," bellowed Fogarty. "You're just the man I've been looking for."

"I . . . I don't doubt that," Blake said.

"And I'm going to take you along with me," declared Fogarty. He threw back his head and laughed until his straw hat shook loose and dropped to the floor.

Cole glanced around him. Fogarty's lusty voice had an electric effect upon the drowsy office. Copy boys awoke and scurried guiltily about. Two frustrated and aging Kiplings appeared in doorways from adjoining rooms to investigate whatever unwonted din was disturbing the solemnity of their sanctum. Even the punkahs seemed to whirl more rapidly.

"Got the extradition papers, Fogarty?" Cole asked.

Again Fogarty blew out gales of laughter. His big hand came

down with a resounding smack across Cole's slim shoulders.

"Extradition, my left kidney!" he exclaimed in the same hurricane voice. "Didn't you hear I quit the force?"

"We don't get much news from California out here. I guess I'm out of touch."

"Well, I quit the force, all right. I'm now chief operative of the best goddam private detective agency in the United States of America. Here's my card. Feldman & Fogarty. Remember Ike Feldman, that identification man from San Diego that came up to work on the Lake Merritt murders with us? Well, we're partners now."

"I'm sure glad to hear it," Cole said. He studied Fogarty from the detective's square-toed shoes to his round, ruddy, well-fed physiognomy. Only a bulldog jaw and beetling straw-colored eyebrows prevented Fogarty from being the portrait of good nature personified.

"What the devil brings you to India, Fogarty?"

"Can't we go some place where we can talk private?" Fogarty asked.

Cole hesitated, frowning. The lines in his forehead added years to a young face already strangely aged by the tragic expression of the eyes and the deep folds at the corners of his mouth. He fished in his desk for a piece of paper, jotted down an address.

"Show this to a *ghari-walla* or a taxi driver," he said as he handed the paper to the detective. "I'll join you there as soon as I'm free. Say half an hour. It's pretty much of a dump, but we can talk there without being disturbed, if that's what you want."

"That's what I want, all right."

"Then I'll see you later, Fogarty."

Cole returned to his desk. He went through the motions of working, but his mind was cluttered with confused, extraneous thoughts, from which, he hoped desperately, would evolve a plan of action. He was still pretty vague about what he was going to do, but he was perfectly clear about what he was *not* going to do.

He was not going to meet Fogarty.

Fogarty's mission might very well be quite as friendly as it appeared to be on the surface. The detective had not instantly produced handcuffs, which was encouraging. Furthermore, he seemed quite unaware of Cole's low station in a community where Occidentals no longer could regard themselves as little less than gods. Fogarty had torn away Cole's mask, destroyed the fictitious Andrews. Even if Fogarty was no longer a cop, the California cops would soon know that Cole was in India. And Cole had no intention of going back to California to die in

the gas chamber for the murder of Eddie Hulbert.

The Hulbert business had been a nightmare. Like a good deal of Cole's life, it had all been an alcoholic mistake. Cole's inability to stop after the fifth drink had already threatened his career as one of the most brilliant police reporters on the Pacific Coast. After drinking himself off the staff of some of the best newspapers in the West, he thought he was getting a grip on himself at last. He was not going to get fired from his Oakland job. Not for drinking, anyhow. Then along came Hulbert. . . .

Eddie Hulbert was beneath contempt. By general consensus of his colleagues, Eddie Hulbert was a louse, a cheat, a rat, and a snotnose. But that didn't excuse Cole. Cole and Hulbert had been sitting out the night trick in the press room of the police station while detectives on the next floor were trying to sweat a confession out of a murder suspect. Hours dragged by with no developments from the detective bureau. Cole and Hulbert had tried to relieve their boredom by nibbling on a bottle of bourbon. When the vigil grew longer and longer, they started shooting craps, although not neglecting the bourbon. Hulbert won suspiciously often. Cole grabbed the dice while Hulbert was pleading for snake-eyes. They were loaded, all right—and Hulbert denied they were his. Alcoholically outraged at the brazen effrontery of the man, Cole set out to choke an admission from him—then fled in terror when the sight of Hulbert's purpling face and bulging eyes told him that his drunken rage must have gone too far.

There had been a ship sailing for the Orient at dawn and Cole was on it. He had gone to sea a year before in an unsuccessful effort to get the alcohol out of his system, and still owned a valid seaman's passport. His right name was on it, so he was afraid to go ashore in Honolulu, afraid that word had come from the Mainland to hold him and ship him home. What a stupid, drunken thing to do, to choke a man to death in a police station! And what a cowardly thing, this flight, this hiding between decks! But Cole had seen men die in the gas chamber at San Quentin. He would wake up at night in a cold sweat, choking at the imaginary fumes that rose as the cyanide pellets were dropped in his dreams. He could see in imagination the whole preliminary workings of justice, just as he had written them many times before—purely objectively. There would be the findings of the Coroner—Cyanosis, asphyxia, death by manual strangulation. . . . There would be the jury filing back into the box, the foreman reading the verdict: "We find the defendant guilty as charged. . . ." Then the sentence,

the death house. . . . So Cole continued to flee. It was an ignominious flight, he realized when the fumes of alcohol cleared from his brain, swept free by the clean clear wind from the sea. But it was too late then.

Cole became Andrews, tramp journalist. Andrews worked the English-language dailies of the East, from Tokyo to Bangkok, from Singapore to India. He drank more and more, to shut out the recurring vision of Hulbert's purpling face, the growing fear of extradition, the terror of the gas chamber. When Fogarty appeared on the scene, Cole—as Andrews—had been working on the Allahabad *Vanguard* for a year. Four times during that period he had been fired for drinking himself into a week of uselessness. In his more sober moments, however, he wrote with such charm and brilliance that the *Vanguard* subscribers missed the wry humor of his anonymous column and wrote letters to the editor to complain. Thus, when he came crawling back, the *Vanguard* hired him again with renewed admonitions—and at a progressively smaller salary. He was finally working for the wages of a young Bengali reporter—which was next to nothing—but he had become so used to his status as a pariah that he didn't care. Something had died inside of him.

But now ex-Sergeant Francis X. Fogarty had appeared in Allahabad to disturb his mental numbness. Some plan of action was certainly called for, but Cole had lost all desire—and ability, too, he thought—to act. He put his hand into his pocket and touched three silver rupees. By some miracle, he had been hoping to make them last through the week until payday. Well, there would be no further need for miracles. The three rupees would provide the most convenient way of handling Cole's problem. He knew a toddy-shop where rot-gut was cheap and three rupees would go a long way. He would get drunk. He would forget about his problem.

Cole put on his misshapen and soiled sun helmet. He was just leaving the compound of the *Vanguard* building, licking his lips at the thought of the toddy-shop, when he felt his arm seized in a grasp so firm it hurt him. He wheeled to look up into the face of a tall, Anglicized Kabuli named Pahar.

"Good evening, Andrews Sahib," said Pahar, with an ironic emphasis on the word "Sahib" that implied all the withering scorn that can be heaped upon a ragged, unkempt member of the recent ruling race by an Oriental who knew himself eminently superior. Pahar was immaculately dressed in a well-tailored suit of tussah silk, and his tiny black mustache accented the disdain stamped on his olive-tinted features.

"Hello, Pahar," Cole said. He knew the Kabuli as all Allahabad knew him: a money-lender and bookmaker whose veneer of occidental dress and manners, polished speech, and sumptuous home out toward the old Cantonment put him so close to the fringe of respectability that the ambiguous character of his remunerative transactions were always overlooked. He was universally regarded as shrewd instead of shady.

The Kabuli did not release his grip on Cole's arm, but started him across the pavement to a large limousine standing at the curb. The curtains of the limousine were drawn, a common phenomenon in Allahabad where the custom of *purdah* still prevailed among many Indian women.

"Come for a little ride . . . Sahib," said Pahar with mock humility.

Cole held back. "Sorry," he said. "I got other plans, Pahar." The Kabuli continued to cling to Cole's arm. He stepped close to the American's back, so close that Cole would feel a spot of something hard pressing against his spine.

The cold of metal penetrated his thin coat.

"Do come," insisted the Kabuli.

Stunned by Pahar's boldness, puzzled as to his possible motive, Cole found himself automatically stepping through the suddenly-opened door of the limousine.

"What the hell is this, Pahar?" he asked. "What's the joke?"

The door slammed shut in answer. The car started. Two strong arms pinioned Cole against the seat while hard, deft hands went through his pockets. By this time his eyes had become accustomed to the dim light of the curtained interior and he saw that there were two other passengers in the car beside Pahar and himself—two hillmen who were either Kabulis like Pahar or perhaps Baluchis. They were dressed identically, a rag of turban tied loosely about each velvet pillbox cap, straight black hair hanging below the ears, short black velvet jackets, voluminous *dhotis*.

"So you haven't got it—eh, Sahib?" sneered Pahar when the search had been concluded.

"I haven't got the drift of all this monkey business, if that's what you mean," Cole said.

"So Fogarty didn't pass it on to you after all?" the Kabuli said.

Cole blinked. This was a ray of light. Pahar's venture into kidnaping was apparently linked with Fogarty's visit to the *Vanguard* office. But how?

"Who's Fogarty?" he asked.

"Need I tell you," said the Kabuli, with the air and accent of an Oxonian impressing a backward child, "that your friend Fogarty had come to India to deliver a diamond necklace worth many lakhs of rupees to the Rajah of Srigunj?"

"And need I tell you," countered Cole, aping the accent, "that

I am not the Rajah of Srigunj?"

"You need not," said Pahar. "Nor do you need to tell me that your friend Fogarty is now waiting for you in a rather smelly pub in Mizwak Bazaar Street."

"I'm not going there," Cole said.

"Wrong again," the Kabuli declared. "You're on your way there now to meet Fogarty for the purpose of helping me intercept that diamond necklace—on behalf of a client of mine who is unavoidably detained in the United States."

"No man would be foolish enough to tote a diamond necklace around Allahabad on his person and in a public conveyance," said Cole, sparring for time. "Even if Fogarty did come to India with a diamond necklace, which I doubt, he'd certainly leave it behind in his hotel safe."

"Still wrong," said Pahar. "Fogarty has been followed ever since he got off the Calcutta mail plane at noon today. I'm certain he has the necklace on him because the Rajah of Srigunj's agent, who was to have met Fogarty, is at this moment lying in a narcotic stupor at the house of a friend of mine."

Cole noted nervously that the limousine had crossed the Jumna and was speeding in the general direction of the address he had given Fogarty.

"I still can't see what all this has got to do with me," he said.

The Kabuli smiled. "For your information," he said, "I am a man of very great although varying determination. My determination increases in direct proportion to the amount of money involved. When there are as many lakhs of rupees involved as represented by this diamond necklace I have mentioned, my determination becomes very great indeed. I will stop at nothing to get that necklace. Nothing. However, I think it will be pleasanter for all concerned if our mission could be accomplished without bloodshed. That's why you are going into that smelly pub in Mizwak Bazaar, and invite Mr. Fogarty for a ride . . . to the house of a friend, if you like. Since he knows you, he will undoubtedly come quietly and with a minimum of disturbance."

"What if I should refuse to cooperate?"

"To refuse at this stage, Sahib," said Pahar with a sadistic smile, "would be extremely deleterious to your health. You forget that your standing in the community is—well, not of the highest. If you should be found dead—shot, let us say, while trying to hold me up—no one in Allahabad would be greatly surprised, or even, I fear, greatly grieved. Moreover, the *durwan* at the *Vanguard* office, from whom I received such a wealth of information for a mere five-rupee note, tells me that your friend Fogarty calls you 'Cole' instead of Andrews. That fact might prove extremely interesting if brought out at the inquest. . . ."

Pahar paused to let the effect of his words sink into Cole's consciousness. Cole licked his dry lips. After a few seconds he said:

"Okay, suppose I act like a good little decoy. What's in it for me then, Pahar?"

"A thousand rupees," said the Kabuli.

A thousand rupees. Cole made mental calculations, translating rupees into dollars. A tidy sum, according to Cole's present standards, yet not a very high price for a man's honor. Or did a murderer, a drunk, a coward, and a pariah have any honor?

Pahar misinterpreted the reason for Cole's hesitation. "Please take into consideration," he said, "that my determination is backed by this —" He flourished a revolver. "— and that you are not armed. Furthermore, my Baluchi friends sitting beside you are very handy with the knife."

"Two thousand," said Cole.

"One thousand."

"A thousand rupees," Cole repeated, as though to himself. He peered through the curtains into the falling light of early evening. Half a block ahead he could see the bright pink calsomined front of the grog shop in which he had given Fogarty rendezvous. The limousine slowed to a stop, its passage blocked by three hump-backed sacred bulls reclining in the street, ruminating contentedly. The chauffeur turned in his seat with a helpless gesture. In a city predominantly Hindu, there was no disturbing these flower-bedecked animals without starting a riot, and the Kabuli had not the slightest intention of starting a riot. He signalled the chauffeur to pull over to the curb.

"You will walk the last few steps—Sahib," he said. "And you will have exactly five minutes to extend your invitation to the bearer of the Rajah's necklace. If in five minutes you do not bring your friend Fogarty to my car here, the responsibility for what happens next will be entirely on your head. Now get out. Walk."

Pahar gave Cole a final prod with the muzzle of his gun. Cole walked numbly toward the black angles and curlicues of a Hindi inscription over the bright pink door. He stopped. Should he make a break for it, leaving Fogarty to the tender mercies of Pahar? That wouldn't work either. He was still within pistol range. He started walking again—toward two elderly Hindus who were squatting outside the pink door, holding hands, chewing areca nut and lime, and expectorating the scarlet juice in a neat design around their bare feet. Cole looked back over his shoulder. He saw the two Baluchis getting out of Pahar's limousine. No doubt about it—they were certainly big men.

Cole stepped through the pink door. Blended odors of slightly rancid grease and raw alcoholic spirits assailed his nostrils. A hand-

pulled punkah of cloth strips swung from the ceiling, stirring up rhythmic tepid eddies as a half-dozing naked boy worked the rope, but making no real impression on the stifling heat. There were no windows. Light was provided by dim electric bulbs glowing in red and blue glass fixtures, casting a weird twilight over the tables and benches that crowded the room. Cole spotted Fogarty and walked toward him unsteadily. He wasn't drunk, although his head spun. He had not had a drink since breakfast, and yet. . . . Five minutes.

"What time is it, Fogarty?" he asked. Without shaking hands, he dropped to a seat on the bench beside the California detective.

"It's six-thirty," said Fogarty. "What can a civilized man drink in a joint like this? I been dyin' o' thirst, but they can't understand me when I talk English. I do better in Calexico and Tijuana. What —?"

"How about a *chota peg?*" suggested Cole, avoiding Fogarty's eyes.

"None o' these heathen poisons for me," Fogarty protested, wiping the perspiration from his ruddy face. "I'll take whiskey."

"A *chota peg* is a small whiskey-soda," Cole explained.

"I knew I didn't want it," said Fogarty. "I want a big one."

"*Do-to burra peg,*" ordered Cole, and the obese Bengali proprietor with a toothless smile set a bottle of Japanese scotch on the table. Then he brought aerated water which he opened by pushing a glass ball into the neck of the bottle.

Cole's hand trembled as he raised his glass to his lips. He needed a drink badly. But before he tipped up the glass, he looked over his shoulder. He saw the rotund proprietor passing among the customers. Two Marwaris in pale blue pugarees sitting over tea and a brass tray of greasy sweets; a bearded Sudra, his forehead smeared with the ashes of cow-dung, toying with a beverage made of grated mangoes; a very dark Anglo-Indian in frowzy whites, disconsolately sipping flat beer; and, at a table near the door, Pahar's two bob-haired giants from the hills. Cole gulped his drink without a breath. Then he leaned toward Fogarty and demanded in tense, low tones:

"Is the ice hot, Fogarty?"

The detective stopped fanning himself with his straw hat long enough to say: "What the hell are you talking about, Cole?"

"About the Rajah's ice," Cole said.

Fogarty's eyes widened. "Still the police reporter, eh, Cole?" he said.

"Never mind that. Have you got the necklace on you?"

"Sure thing," said Fogarty. "Right in my money belt."

Cole made a sound like a punctured toy balloon. "My God," he

breathed. "Why didn't you get a local police guard?"

"The police," declared Fogarty, "are not exactly welcome on this job, if you get what I mean. That's why I come up to the offices of the *Bodyguard* or whatever they call that newspaper of yours. The Rajah's agent was supposed to meet me at the airport, but he didn't show. Now, I'm what you might call somethin' of a greenhorn in this country, not havin' been here but six hours, so I figure I ought to get an old-timer to give me a steer, regardin' the heathen language tossed out at a guy in taxicabs and whatnots. And what could be more efficacious, I says to myself, than to hire me a newspaper character, which I have always been a friend of, as you know. So I high-tailed it up to the *Offguard* office, Cole, not for a minute thinkin' I'd find *you* in a dump like that. But I'm sure glad I did, Cole. I'm sure glad."

Cole poured himself another stiff drink. The first one had no effect whatever.

"You're glad?" he echoed.

"In spades," said Fogarty. "Now, the reason the local cops ain't invited on this little party of mine is that this here Rajah o' Three Guns, or whatever his name is—I can spell it but I can't pronounce it—lost this string of ice to this fancy b—, well, to a lady, you might call 'er. She borrowed it. Then this lady's husband turns up, with a new wrinkle in the old badger game. He begins hintin' around about maybe a little blackmail would be in order if the Rajah should want his ice back. Go ahead, arrest me, says the husband, only remember that the government is kinda touchy these days when Rajahs get turpitudinous. Even under the British *raj,* says hubby, there was a certain moral standard which required . . . well, at least lip service. And look what happened to the old Maharajah o' Indore. Well, my Rajah, not wantin' no scandal or blackmail, gives the Feldman & Fogarty International Detective Agency the job o' locatin' the diamonds in the San Francisco Bay area and bringin' 'em back safe. And a damn' fine job we done on it, if I say so myself."

"What time is it, Fogarty?" Cole still held his second drink in his hand. He had been fingering the glass nervously as Fogarty talked, but he had not raised it to his lips.

"Time? Why, you just asked me, Cole—"

"Never mind. What time is it?"

"Twenty-five minutes to seven," Fogarty said, consulting his watch.

"Five minutes," murmured Cole between white lips. He looked over his shoulder again. One of Pahar's hill men was gone. The other met Cole's anxious glance with glazed, cold, menacing eyes. Pahar himself was probably just outside the door. The time had run

out. Or had it? Would Cole still have time to lead Fogarty to slaughter—for a thousand rupees?

"Now what I want with you, Cole old boy," Fogarty was saying, "is to sort of act like a kind of bodyguard and a guide to Three Guns, wherever that is. Can you get away for a few days, Cole, old man?"

Cole looked back over his shoulder again. Suddenly he knew what he wanted to do. He slammed down his untouched drink with such force that the glass splintered and the liquid gushed over the table.

"Shades o' Shaughnessey!" exclaimed Fogarty. But he was not perturbed by Cole's smashing his glass. The detective was staring at a skinny Hindu, wearing only a dirty turban and a ragged *dhoti,* who had just come in from the street. Under one arm the Hindu carried two round flattish baskets pressed against his bare trunk. Under the other he carried a gourd instrument. Without preliminaries he squatted on the floor, removed the wicker lids from his baskets, and began to play a shrill tune on his gourd pipe. Instantly two dark, gleaming serpentine heads arose from the baskets, moving upward with weaving rhythm.

"This is the first time I ever see snakes on just one drink!" said Fogarty.

Cole stared at the snake charmer. The Hindu's cheeks puffed as he blew a monotonous tune on his gourd—four notes ascending, three descending, in endless repetition. One bony knee, protruding from his ragged *dhoti,* moved in time to the music. The two snakes, the spectacle pattern gleaming as the hoods distended behind their heads, swayed slightly to the rhythm, an eerie ballet just two feet above the floor.

"Forget the cobras!" Cole commanded, with an air of authority that surprised him. "Look at me, Fogy—and listen to me. You're on a spot, Fogy, so for the love of Lake Merritt watch yourself. In about ten seconds somebody's going to melt the Rajah's ice!"

"The hell you say!"

"Your lady blackmailer has a friend here called Pahar. She tipped him off and he's just outside this gin-mill. One of his shiv men is sitting just inside, watching us. . . ."

"Where?" Fogarty had caught Cole's nervous tautness.

"Near the door. Behind the snake charmer."

Fogarty turned to look. The two cobras were still swaying to the rhythm of the Hindu's droning tune. The Marwari tea drinkers tossed him copper pice. The coins rang on the cement floor.

Suddenly the lights winked out.

"Pahar!" Cole exclaimed between his teeth. He stood up, nerves tingling, muscles like violin strings. "Watch yourself, Fogarty. This is the Kabuli's trick."

"Let's get outa here." Fogarty's

voice registered strange grave notes.

"Don't move. For God's sake, don't move!" Cole pleaded. "The cobras are on the floor between us and the door. If you step on a cobra—. Get on the table, Fogy. Quick."

Cole heard a step on the bench, then the table. The darkness around him resounded with the confused uproar of terror. The hoarse screams of men afraid echoed hideously in half a dozen dialects.

"Sahmp! Ai! Khabardar! Sahmp! Mardalo!"

The squealing of the gourd began again, then stopped. A bench overturned somewhere with a crash and a clang of brass dishes on concrete. The panic-stricken soprano cries of the Bengali proprietor sounded above the baritone chorus of his customers.

"Fogy! Quick! Got a match?"

"Sure. Just—." There was a grunt, a second of silence, then Fogarty's voice came again, half-strangled, gasping. "Dammit, Cole! Something hit me in the face. Something cold and clammy and scaly. Oh my God, Cole, it's coiling around my neck! A cobra, Cole. A cobra. . . ."

Cole moved through the blackness, stretching out a hand toward Fogarty's voice. An icy spasm ran through him as he touched the clammy garotte about Fogarty's neck. His fingers brushed the detective's hands, raised instinctively to tear away the thing that had come at him out of the darkness, chill with the feel of death. At the same moment something heavy came hurtling toward him, smashed through between him and Fogarty. Cole fell back. He heard a heavy thump on the table, felt his feet go out from under him as the table overturned.

For a second after his head hit the floor, he watched a stunning display of painful pyrotechnics. Then his hand come into second contact with the clammy snake-like scarf that had been wound around the detective's throat. He jerked his arm away, tried to get to his feet. One leg was pinned under the overturned table, made heavier by men who were scuffling upon it, almost within his reach in the darkness. He heard grunts, gasps, thrashing blows. He heard Fogarty's profane shouts, caught the phrase, "Knife or no knife, I'm damned—"

The weight suddenly lifted from the table. Cole pulled his leg free. He regained his feet. He sensed shadows grappling near him. A bony fist smashed into his face. He went down again. He groped his way along the floor, his fingers desperately seeking a weapon of some kind, any kind. One hand touched a bottle. His fingers closed around the smooth, cool neck. He scrambled to his feet.

The darkness still echoed with screams, with Fogarty's sputtering profanity, with the breathless,

panting sounds of struggling men. Then came the cry, "Cole! Where the hell are you, Cole? The belt, Cole! . . ."

He heard the shuffling of feet, saw a shadow gliding toward the door. He lunged toward it. A deafening explosion beat upon his ear drums. A thundering flash of orange flame revealed a swift vignette of Pahar the Kabuli.

Cole sprang, swinging his bottle.

There was another blast of thunder, a brief mushroom of fire, then black silence. A frightened whimpering broke the stillness then stopped. A match scratched, flared, sputtered, and went out. A slim Anglo-Indian girl appeared at one end of the room, a crimson *sari* wound about her bronze body and over her head. She held a candle in front of her.

The candlelight shone peacefully upon the terror-stricken Indian and Eurasian customers huddled in a corner behind a barricade of upset tables and benches. Fogarty, his clothes shredded, his bare thigh bleeding from a knife gash, stood dumbly looking down at a dead water snake which lay at his feet. Cole was kneeling on the floor, half doubled up, grasping his left wrist with his right hand. Blood trickled through his fingers.

"You hurt, Cole?" Fogarty was at his side.

"A scratch," Cole said.

"They grabbed the Rajah's ice!" Fogarty's indignation was loud and echoing. "They slit my belt, peeled it off me—"

"They grabbed," Cole interrupted, "but they didn't keep it. Here." He pulled the money belt from between his knees, handed it to Fogarty.

"Good lord, Cole. How the hell—? Who the hell—?"

"There he is." Cole pointed a bleeding finger at a figure in a well-tailored tussah-silk suit sprawled in the doorway. "It's Pahar the Kabuli. When he fired to cover his getaway, I conked him with a bottle. Funny how a bottle is always getting mixed up in my life, Fogy. But did you notice, Fogy, that I really didn't touch that second drink?"

"I noticed," Fogarty said. "But you killed him anyhow, didn't you, the big stiff?"

Cole limped over to examine the prostrate Kabuli. With his foot he turned the man over. There was a deep cut on Pahar's forehead. He groaned.

"He's got a headache, is all," Cole said. "He'll be sitting up in two shakes."

"And have I got a pain in the neck, with all those snakes wrapped around my Adam's apple. Did one of 'em bite me, Cole? What about the one on the floor? Did it bite me?"

"That snake bite you? The one on the floor has been dead so long I can smell it from here, and it was harmless to start with. The hill men made a necktie out of it

to scare you to death and keep your hands busy while they were working on your money belt. They wouldn't monkey with a live cobra in the dark, but they wanted you to think they would."

"I never did like snakes," Fogarty said, "in the grass or out."

"Look, Fogy." Cole stood up suddenly. "The fat boss of this gin-mill is out front yelling his head off for a *pahare-wallah*. This place will be hopping with Indian cops in no time. If we hurry, you can catch the Punjab mail out of here and deliver that necklace in Srigunj tomorrow morning. Head for that narrow alley across the way and don't stop until you reach the next street."

A few minutes later Fogarty and Cole were rolling along in a *ticca ghari,* a closed carriage resembling a packing case on wheels.

"We'll stop at the bazaar and get you some clothes," Cole said. "I'm glad that straw hat of yours got smashed, anyhow. Now we can get you a proper topee."

"Not me, you won't!" Fogarty protested. "I ain't goin' to wear one 'o them limey soup-tureen hats."

"You'll wear one and like it," Cole said. "This is India. There's no midday sun right now but there will be tomorrow, and if you go out in it without proper protection, people will think you're a mad dog or an Englishman."

"Hold out your hand," Fogarty said, tearing a strip off his tattered shirt. "I'm goin' to make a tourniquet. That wrist o' yours is bleedin' all over the place."

Cole made no reply. He did not move his arm. He was staring straight ahead, lost in thought.

"Funny thing, Fogarty," he said at last. "When Pahar started shooting and I started after him with the bottle, I was sure I was a goner. But I didn't care. I can't understand it. I thought he was going to kill me and still I wasn't afraid. Why not? I've been afraid of dying for the last three years. Maybe I figured subconsciously that getting knocked off in defense of somebody or something was a better way to die than sniffing cyanide. Whatever it was I'm not afraid any more. I may as well go back and face the gas chamber, Fogy."

"What the hell gas chamber are you talking about?" Fogarty demanded.

Cole smiled wistfully. "Let's quit kidding," he said. "It's no secret that I'm the one choked Hulbert to death in the press room of the Oakland police station three years ago."

"You mean Eddie Hulbert, used to be a reporter?"

Cole nodded. "We were both cockeyed drunk," he said, "and he was a twenty-four-karat stinker. I caught him with loaded dice. Maybe they'll consider those extenuating circumstances. Maybe they'll let me plead to Murder

Two. Or perhaps even manslaughter."

Fogarty exploded with such a tremendous roar of laughter that the *ghari-wallah* pulled up at the curb and stuck his head into the carriage to find out what had happened.

"I remember now," he said when his laughter had subsided. "One o' the boys found Eddie Hulbert on the floor o' the press room, dead to the world and smellin' like a South o' Market barrel house. He looked kinda blue in the face, so the boys put the inhalator on him, and he came around cussin' a green streak—."

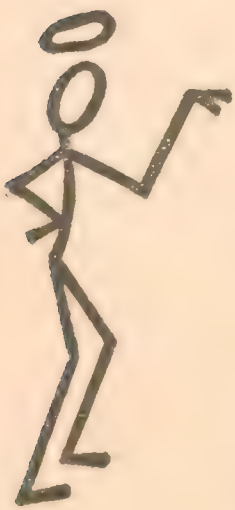
"You mean Eddie Hulbert is still alive?"

"You might call it that," said Fogarty, making tall eyebrows. "He's press agent for some film outfit in Hollywood, makin' five hundred a week, so they say."

"Why, the lousy punk!" Cole exclaimed. Can you figure the world's worst newspaper man falling into a job like that? I got a good notion to go back and take it away from him."

"You'll never make it," Fogarty declared. "You'll bleed to death first—unless you'll finally hold out your arm so I can stop the leak."

NEXT MONTH—



A Fourth at Bridge disappears in
E. Phillips Oppenheim's THE THIRTEENTH CARD

We meet a strange murderess in
Craig Rice's LADY'S DAY AT THE MORGUE

A beautiful conspirator is frustrated in
Edgar Wallace's HAPPY TRAVELLERS

A stubborn man learns a lesson in
Frank O'Rourke's WITNESS FOR THE DEFENCE

A man framed for murder fights back in
James M. Fox's THE CANDID CORPSE

An unpleasant man finally meets the Saint in
Leslie Charteris' THE ART PHOTOGRAPHER

and

A very proper man is not quite himself in
Louis Golding's new story PUNCTUAL MURDERER

—in the SAINT

the old routine

by . . . Leslie Charteris

Simon Templar seldom felt the calypso was right which warned, "Never marry a pretty woman." Except this time.

OF SIMON TEMPLAR it could truly be said that to him all the world was a stage, and all the men and women merely players in an endless comedy-drama designed for his especial entertainment and incidentally his cut at the box office.

To Mr. Stratford Keane, all the world was also a stage, with the difference that he was the principal player and all the other men and women merely audience. This attitude persisted in spite of the fact that it was many years since the public had shown any great desire to see him behind the footlights, and his thespian activities had been largely restricted to giving readings from Shakespeare to women's clubs and conducting classes in The Drama in the more obscure summer-theatre colonies. In spite of these slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, however, he still maintained the fur-collared overcoats, the flowing ties, the long white locks, and the sweeping gestures of his departed day; and wherever he might be, the fruity resonance of his voice was still pitched to the second balcony in rounded periods from which every traditional caricature

There were moments when the Saint rather appreciated the publicity which made beautiful women react to his name in this extremely promising way.

From: THE SAINT ERRANT
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of a Shakespearean ham might have been taken.

Simon saw him advancing through the Pump Room, not in a perfectly straight line, for one of the causes of Mr. Keane's eclipse was a weakness for the stuff that maketh glad the heart of man, but nevertheless with an unmistakable destination, and the attractions of Chicago fell under a slight cloud.

"Don't look now, he said to Patricia Holm, "but we are on the brink of another recital."

The main attraction of Chicago at the moment glanced up.

"Poor old Stratford," she said. "He's a good-hearted old bore. And not such a fool as you think, or why do you think he got the job of directing this new production of *Macbeth?*"

"Probably it was the only way they could get rid of him," Simon suggested. "So long as he's locked up in a theatre in rehearsal he can't be out boring people anywhere else."

"You and your big heart," Patricia said. "It's a wonderful break for him, and he must have needed it badly."

"I'm thrilled to death at Stratford Keane getting a break," Simon assured her. "And I should be almost ecstatic if you'd never introduced him to me."

It was a little late to dream along those lines, for Mr. Keane was already upon them and fully determined to make the most of their acquaintance. He held a half-filled glass over his heart and bowed deeply.

"Ah, Miss Holm! And Mr. Templar," he boomed, causing people several tables away to look up and try to locate the loud-speaker. "Well met, well met!"

Patricia smiled.

"How are you this evening, Mr. Keane?—Won't you sit down?" she added hastily, as Mr. Keane leaned rather heavily on the table and shook a few drops out of their cocktails.

"A pleasure." Mr. Keane sat down and heaved a vast and doleful sigh. "Ah, this is indeed a haven in a world where every man must play a part—and mine a sad one . . ."

"Why—what's the matter?"

"I have just returned from the theatre," stated Mr. Keane tragically, as if he were announcing the end of the world. "We went through one of our final rehearsals."

"Was that bad?" Simon asked.

Stratford Keane surveyed him pityingly.

"Young man," he said, "to use the word 'bad' in that connection is to scorn all the resources of the English tongue. As a masterpiece of understatement, however, it might have some merit."

"You mean you won't be able to open on schedule?" Patricia asked sympathetically.

"On the contrary," said Mr. Keane. "I'm afraid we shall."

Simon raised his eyebrows. "Afraid?"

"My dear boy," said Mr. Keane heavily, "the success of Shakespeare in the emasculated theatre of today is uncertain even with the most brilliant of performers; but when the lines of the Bard are assaulted by a gang of bellowing buffoons and dizzy doxies such as have been thrust upon me, the greatest play of all time would be doomed before the curtain rose."

"But isn't Iris Freeman a good actress?" Patricia asked.

"As a soubrette, yes. But as Lady Macbeth—" Mr. Keane made an expressive gesture which swept an ashtray off the table. "Still, I could almost bear with her if only she would not insist on putting all her friends in the cast regardless of their incompetence—and most especially that tailor's dummy, Mark Belden, whom she picked as her leading man."

"I never heard of him," Simon admitted.

"Would that I shared your happy ignorance. Unfortunately, I have been condemned to get to know Mr. Belden so well that his voice will ring in my ears until they sink into the merciful silence of the grave. A vaudeville hoofer who murders Shakespeare with every breath he takes!"

"But aren't you the director?" Patricia put in. "Don't you have anything to say about the cast?"

Stratford Keane glowered at her despondently.

"My dear, your innocence is equalled by nothing but your beauty. The only voice which has anything to say about the cast is the voice of the money which is backing the production, which happens to belong to Miss Freeman."

"Shouldn't you have said that it belonged to Rick Lansing?" Simon put in shrewdly.

Patricia turned to him with a tiny wrinkle forming between her brows.

"Who's that?"

"Miss Freeman's latest husband," Simon answered. "Better known to his business associates as Rick the Barber. Only it probably wouldn't be tactful to mention that when she's around." He shifted his eyes. "Which means starting about now."

He had seen enough advance publicity pictures of Iris Freeman to recognize her as she came towards the table. It would have been impossible in any event not to notice her, for the furs and jewels which trimmed a face and figure that could have attracted quite enough attention without any artificial adornment at all were obviously worn for the secondary function of practically forcing the observer to ask whom they belonged to. And the unhesitating way in which her path was headed for Stratford Keane established a con-

nection between them that was almost enough clue by itself.

"Stratford, darling!" she cried. "I was just betting Mark that we'd find you here as usual."

"A feat of unparalleled perspicacity on your part," said Keane. He struggled halfway to his feet, rocking the table dangerously. "May I present two dear friends of mine—Miss Patricia Holm and Mr. Simon Templar. This is Miss Iris Freeman, whom I was just telling you about. And —ch—" He winced slightly at the exquisitely tailored male who appeared from behind Miss Freeman's platina—"Mr. Belden."

Iris Freeman's beautiful dark eyes found Simon and grew wide and worshipful.

"Simon Templar?" she repeated. "You don't mean—the Saint?"

Simon nodded resignedly. It was not always convenient to be identified so readily with the paradoxical alias under which his identity had once upon a time been concealed; but those days were pretty far in the past, and few people who read newspapers were unaware of the almost legendary career of brigandage which his name stood for. He was getting more used to it all the time, and certainly there was nothing much else to do except make the best of it.

Which was not always so bad, either, when the vague associations of his name made beautiful women look at him in that excited and expectant way.

He smiled.

"That was the name," he said, "before I saw the error of my ways."

Belden said: "This is wonderful. You know, Iris is one of your most devoted fans, Mr. Templar. She's crazy about you."

Simon restrained an impulse to empty the remains of a martini over him, and said: "I think that's a wonderful way to be crazy. But, of course, I'm prejudiced."

"I was just telling Mark the other day that the only person in the whole world whose autograph I'd really like to have was the Saint," Iris Freeman said.

"Isn't that sort of turning the tables on your public, Miss Freeman?" murmured Patricia sweetly.

The actress laughed gaily, with every note beautifully modulated for imaginary microphones.

"Hardly a habit of mine. But we all have our weaknesses, don't we? And the Saint's also one of mine, darling . . . Mark, do you have a piece of paper?"

Belden fumbled in his pockets and produced a folded sheet.

"Here you are."

"I suppose if I had more practice I could take these situations in my stride," said the Saint.

"You'll do all right," said Patricia. "Sign the paper and satisfy your adoring public."

Simon took out a pen and scribbled his name.

"And you must draw the Saint figure," Iris Freeman insisted. "It wouldn't be complete without that."

The Saint patiently sketched his trademark—the straight-line skeleton figure crowned with the conventional halo which had once been enough to give the most hardened citizens an uneasy qualm at the pit of their stomachs—and reflected that a lot of things had changed. Or had they?

"That's simply wonderful," Iris Freeman gushed. "You'll never believe what a thrill this is for me. I only wish I could stay and talk to you for hours, but Mark and I have to run. How would you like to come to our rehearsal tomorrow?"

"He'd love to," Patricia said firmly. "But I'm afraid he has another engagement."

"Oh . . . I see." The actress bit her lip. "Well, I'll be sure and send you some tickets for the opening, Saint. And you must come to the party afterwards. I'll manage to get you off to myself somehow. . . . Come along, Mark."

"Yes, dear." Belden gave Simon one of those unnecessarily hearty handshakes. "It's been a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Templar. And you, Miss Holm. So long, Stratford. Don't let it get you down."

They made an exit which should have had an orchestral background; and Stratford Keane stared after them rudely.

"The only party after the opening," he said, "should be a wake, with those two as the guests of honor."

"I don't think Simon agrees with you," Patricia said. "He's discovered that there are things in Iris's favor which you never mentioned in your description."

Simon reached for her glass and finished her drink for her.

"You're very unfair to the wench," he said. "If it's a crime to be fascinated by me, what are you doing here?"

He produced folding money and handed it to a hopeful waiter.

"Buy Mr. Keane another drink," he said. "And a taxi afterwards, if he needs it." He stood up. "I'm sorry we have to rush off, but I have to buy Pat some dinner. She doesn't talk back so much with her mouth full."

Mr. Keane nodded broodingly.

"Good night," he said. "I shall see thee—at Philippi."

They made their escape, Simon hoped before Mr. Keane was reminded that the Pump Room was also in the business of serving food.

The encounter was typical of many similar incidents in the Saint's life—coincidental, casual, and apparently pointless, and yet destined to lead into unsuspected complications. Adventure, for him,

moved in a mysterious way. Nothing ever seemed to happen to him that was completely unimportant, or that led nowhere. He had come to accept it as part of an inscrutable fate, like the people who are known to insurance companies as "accident-prone": regardless of whether he took the initiative or not, something was always happening to him. He seldom thought about it much any more, except that it may have subconsciously contributed to a pleasantly persistent euphoria, an almost imperceptible but continuous excitement which made the colors of his world just a little brighter than anyone else's.

For several hours he certainly didn't think much more about any of the three people who had just met at his table, or attach any immediate significance to the meeting—not even when he brought Patricia into his suite at the Ambassador for a nightcap, and switched on the lights and found himself looking down the barrel of a gun in the hand of an unexpected guest who had beaten them to it without an invitation.

Simon Templar had looked down the barrels of guns before, and it had ceased to be a surprising experience for him. The turbulent course of his career had left enough survivors to constitute a sizable roster of characters whose principal ambition would always be to view the Saint again from behind the percentage end of a small piece of ordnance. The only remarkable thing about it was that Simon couldn't at the moment think of any particular person in the vicinity who had reason to be trying to fullfil such a whim at that time.

"Well, well, well," he murmured. "Look what people are doing now to get a hotel room."

"Shut the door, bub," said the man. "But don't put your hat down. You ain't staying long."

He had blue-black hair and a blue chin, and his suit was cut just about the way you would expect a suit behind a gun to be cut. Something about him was vaguely familiar, but Simon couldn't place it for the moment.

"That's one way to bring an invitation, anyhow," said the Saint. "Where is this party we're going to?"

"You'll find out when we get there," said the man. "Just wait till I fix the girl friend so she don't make a fuss about losing you."

He took a roll of adhesive tape from his pocket.

"I think I'm going to faint," said Patricia.

She slumped back against the wall by the door, exactly where the light switch was. As her knees buckled she caught one arm on the switch and the lights clicked out.

The gunman started to move to one side, peering blindly into the

dark. He bumped into a standard lamp and set it rattling.

That was the only sound he heard before an arm slid around his neck from behind, and a row of steel fingers clamped on his right hand and bent it inwards to within a milimeter of breaking his wrist.

His hand opened involuntarily, and the gun dropped on the carpet. Simon located it with his toe and put his foot on it.

"Okay, Pat," he said. "I've got him."

The lights went on again.

"Nice work," said the Saint. "You read all the right stories."

He released his pressure on the gunman's larynx before suffocation had seriously set in, pushed the man away, and picked up the gun.

"Now, chum," he said, "where did you say we were going?"

The man rubbed his wrists tenderly and glanced at him without answering.

The first vague impression of familiarity that Simon had felt began to come into focus.

"On second thought, you needn't bother," said the Saint. "I know where I've seen you before. At the Blue Paradise. You're one of Rick Lansing's boys."

"I ain't talking," said the man.

"Then we're going to find your company rather dull," said the Saint. "Why don't you beat it before you bore the hell out of us?"

The gunman seemed to have difficulty co-ordinating his ideas and his ears.

"Scram, bum," said the Saint.

The man gulped, opened the door, and departed hastily.

"Nice work yourself," said Patricia. "Why on earth did you let him go?"

"I didn't feel excited about having him live with us," Simon told her. "I might have killed him, but the management wouldn't like us to keep his body in the room, and if we threw it out of the window it might have hurt somebody."

"But aren't you a bit curious about what he was doing here?"

"I already know, darling. He was sent here to fetch me to Rick the Barber. That was obvious as soon as I placed him."

"But what does Rick Lansing want with you?"

"That," said the Saint, "is a question that Rick will have to answer himself."

Patricia picked up her wraps.

"Wait till I powder my nose," she said.

"Oh, no," said the Saint. "From the type of escort Rick sent with the invitation, I'm afraid he may not be on his strictly Emily Post behavior, and even if he has hitched his wagon to a Broadway star he doesn't seem to have sworn off his old business methods. You stay here with the Old Curio and don't open the door to any strange men."

He kissed her lightly and closed the door on her argument.

The Blue Paradise was one of the gaudier cabarets in the Loop. It was not a rendezvous for the social-register set, but it did a roaring and frequently even howling trade in tourists and tired businessmen, both local and travelling. The specialty dancers specialized mainly in undressing to slow music, and the drinks were thoughtfully diluted just enough to allow the patrons to get an adequate lift without becoming unconscious before they had spent a great deal of money. Simon knew that it was one of Rick Lansing's operations, and also that there was an office in the back which was the headquarters for Lansing's other business interests, which were many and various.

Rick the Barber might have left his original vocation far behind, but he was still one of its best customers. He had dark wavy hair that glistened with oil and brushing. The skin over his tough square features was smooth and glowing from many facials. His hands were shinily manicured. He looked far more like a toughened chorus boy than what he was.

He sat behind his desk and listened impassively to the alibi of his ambassador.

"I tell ya, Rick, I couldn't do anything about it. The Saint musta been tipped off. He had four guys with him and they was all heeled."

"I don't believe you," Lansing said contemptuously. "But even if it's the truth, what did you come straight back here for? How do you know one of 'em didn't tail you?"

"Honest, Rick, I shook 'em clean."

This was when Simon Templar quietly opened the door and stepped into the room.

"That's right, Rick," he corroborated gravely. "He shook all of 'em except me. . . . Just don't do anything reckless, boys, and I won't hurt you either."

The position of his left hand in the side pocket of his coat made his proposition especially persuasive.

Lansing kept his hands on top of the desk and considered the situation without a change of expression.

"Good evening, Mr. Templar," he said at length.

"Good evening, Rick," said the Saint amiably. "I believe you wanted to see me. So here I am. You didn't need to make a production of it. I'm only too anxious to hear what's on your mind. Shall we talk it over in private, or does Sonny Boy here make you feel safer?"

Lansing sat still for a moment, and then made a slight movement of his hand.

"Beat it, Joe."

"That's better," said the Saint. "Now he can collect the rest of the mob outside the door, which

will make you feel really comfortable, but they know I've got you here, so I haven't a thing to worry about. We can let our hair down and enjoy it."

Lansing suddenly smiled displaying a wide row of perfect white teeth.

"And I thought you were supposed to be smart," he said. "You're wasting yourself, Saint. Listen, with your talents you're just the guy I need for a partner. Petty blackmail isn't big enough for you. And what if you do tell the D.A. that Jake Hardy didn't commit suicide? You couldn't prove a thing."

A slight frown touched the Saint's brow.

"Jake Hardy?" he repeated. "You mean your *last* partner?"

"Go on—kid me."

The Saint's memory, which missed very little of the underworld news that reached the papers or circulated through the grapevine, responded again. Jake Hardy, for reasons unknown, had plunged from a penthouse window to his death several months before, leaving Rick Lansing in sole control of a cartel which, while it was not rated by Dun & Bradstreet and had little standing with the Better Business Bureau, was one of the richest enterprises of the Windy City.

"Let me make a guess," said the Saint slowly. "Do I gather that someone claiming to be me is trying to shake you down for a certain amount of moola on account of they know that Jake's high dive wasn't Jake's own idea?"

"Look," Lansing said impatiently. "The comedy belongs outside with the floor show. Why, even if you hadn't given your name on the phone, I can recognize your voice."

"My voice?"

"Yes, your voice."

"And that's why you sent Sonny Boy to bring me in?"

Lansing made a clipped gesture.

"I was upset. So now I'm sorry. No hard feelings, Saint. Believe me, a partnership with me will pay you a lot more than the lousy ten grand you're asking for hush money. It wouldn't be just this joint. I could give you a cut in everything all over town—sports arenas, bookies, numbers—the works."

Simon fished out a cigarette with his right hand and arched an eyebrow over his lighter.

"Even in the Shakespearean drama, too?"

The other blinked.

"Huh? Oh—that." He smiled again, deprecatingly, with the corners of his mouth turned down. "Just a present for my wife. If she wants to play Shakespeare she can play Shakespeare. I can afford it. It might even make money. There aren't many things I can't afford, and most of 'em make money sometimes. I can afford you, and make money for

both of us. The two of us together could really clean up."

"I appreciate the compliment," said the Saint. "But there's one hitch."

"What's that?"

"I wasn't the guy who tried to blackmail you."

A slight scowl settled over Lansing's black eyes.

"I told you before—the comedy belongs outside."

"I don't doubt the show could use it," said the Saint. "Only whether you like it or not, the comedy is right here. Because I give you my word that I've never spoken to you on the phone in my life, and I don't have the least idea how to start proving that Jake was helped out of his window."

Lansing stared at him for several seconds.

"Is that on the level?"

"Absolutely."

"Then who is this guy who's pretending to be you?"

"That," said the Saint, "is what I'd like to know. I'll have to try and find out." He took the hand out of his left side pocket. "Now that we understand each other, I guess you won't mind if I leave."

Rick the Barber stood up and came around the desk. He opened the door.

The first gunman, reinforced by two others, stood watchfully in the corridor outside.

"It's okay," Lansing said. "The Saint is okay."

Simon strolled through the goon squad, and Lansing followed him out to the bar.

"Will you let me know if you find out anything, Saint?"

"I will if you will," Simon agreed. "By the way, how was this dough to be paid?"

"In an envelope addressed to Cleve Wentz at the Canal Street Post Office, general delivery. I can have the boys keep an eye on the window."

"It might take a long time," said the Saint. "And it still wouldn't be easy to spot the pick-up. But there's no harm trying . . . I'll be seeing you, Rick. Give my regards to Lady Macbeth."

Nevertheless, he had no more brilliant ideas himself, and even the next morning found him without inspiration. The problem of locating an anonymous impersonator who had just spoken to somebody once on the telephone made the proverbial needle in the haystack look simple.

He was brooding over the impasse after a late breakfast when there was a knock on the door, and when he opened it he was confronted by a pair of rather prominent eyes in a lean dyspeptic face which he recognized instantly. Taken in conjunction with the recent trend of his thoughts, the recognition gave him a premonitory qualm which no one could have guessed from the cordiality with which he renewed an old acquaintance.

"Why, Alvin!" he exclaimed.

"This is a pleasant surprise. Come in and tell me about your latest triumphs."

Lieutenant Alvin Kearney came in without a responding smile, but there was a certain amount of smugness in the lines of his normally unhappy countenance.

"I don't know what sort of triumph you'd call it," he said. "But this time I've really got the goods on you, my friend."

The Saint looked puzzled.

"The goods, Alvin?"

"Yeah," Kearney said grimly. "Although frankly I never thought I'd get you for common blackmail."

Simon realized that he had been unduly despondent. He didn't think for a moment that Rick the Barber would have gone to the police, but what he had overlooked was that the impostor was not likely to stop with one victim.

"A lot of people seem to be going nuts these days," he remarked almost cheerfully. "Who says I'm blackmailing him now?"

"Vincent Maxted."

"The meat packer?"

"You ought to know," Kearney said."You claim to be able to prove that he made a nice piece of change during the war out of black-market steaks."

Simon lighted a cigarette.

"I keep being amazed by the things I know," he said. "It's a little startling to be credited with clairvoyance all of a sudden. The embarrassing thing is that I don't really deserve it. I assure you, Alvin, this is the first I've heard about Maxted's illegal butchery."

"Is that so?" Kearney was unimpressed. "Then I guess you'd figured he'd just be scared enough to pay up rather than go through an investigation. It doesn't make any difference. You made the threat anyhow, and he'll be able to identify your voice."

"My voice? On the telephone?" Simon scoffed.

"That's for your lawyer to fight about. It's good enough for me to hold you. Let's go, Saint. I've got a nice cosy room reserved for you at headquarters."

Simon thought for a few moments.

"Okay," he said at last. "If you want to stick your neck out I suppose I can't stop you. Do you mind if I throw a few things in a bag?"

"Make it snappy," Kearney said.

He followed Simon into the bedroom. The Saint pulled out a suitcase and opened it. He took out a crumpled piece of paper, glanced at it, and gave a guilty start. Rather clumsily, he tried to get rid of it under the bed.

"What's that?" Kearney snapped.

"Nothing," said the Saint unconvincingly. "Just an old bill."

"Let me see it."

Simon hesitated, without moving.

Kearney came around the bed,

pushed the Saint aside, and went down on his knees to grope underneath.

Simon stepped out of the bedroom, closed the door, and turned the key in the lock, in one fluid sweep of co-ordinated movements. He was out of the suite so quickly that he did not even hear the detective's roar of rage.

By day, the Blue Paradise had an uninviting drabness which contrasted significantly with its neon-lighted nocturnal glitter. The doors were inhospitably closed and locked, but Simon found a bell to ring, and after a while a beady eye peered out through a two-inch opening and was sufficiently satisfied to let him in.

"Greetings, Sonny Boy," said the Saint. "Is Rick around yet?"

"I guess he'll see you," conceded the gunsel gloomily, and Simon went through the dim deserted bar and down the back corridor to Lansing's office.

"I've got news for you, Rick," he said. "You're in good company."

Lansing looked up from the accounts he was studying.

"What does that mean?"

"Someone else I don't have anything on is being blackmailed by the Saint."

"Who's that?"

Simon skipped the question for a moment.

"Did you buy any black-market meat during the war?"

"Maybe you really want a job in the floor show," Lansing said. "I'll buy the gag. So I had to stay in business. So what?"

"Did you get anything through Vincent Maxted?"

Lansing's eyelids flickered.

"What about him?"

"Only this," said the Saint. "The first job of blackmail that we met over referred to something which only you or someone very close to you should have known. Maybe the same can be said about this new job. I've got an idea it can. And if that's true, we may be getting somewhere. We don't want to miss something that might be right under our nose."

Lansing's eyes were flat and hard like jet.

"I can only think of one guy who might be liable to know as much as I know myself, including about what happened to Jake," he said. "But don't ask me *how* he'd know. I just say I could believe it because I know the kind of guy he is. This guy always seems to know too much about everything that goes on."

"And who's that?"

"Some people call him the Saint."

Simon smiled.

"You give me too much credit, Rick. As a matter of fact, I never suspected anything about Jake Hardy until you practically told me yourself. I'd never even given it a thought. From what I heard, he was no great loss to the commu-

nity, so why should I worry about how he was moved on? I couldn't have cared less if it had been the other way around; and when somebody does get you one of these days, as they probably will, it still won't bother me."

"Then what are you wasting your time here for?"

"Because I hate people taking my name in vain, and because I'm beginning to think it's someone quite close to you. Someone who knows much more about your affairs than I do," said the Saint thoughtfully. He went to the door. "Think it over, chum."

There was a drugstore on the corner of the block, and he stopped there to phone Patricia.

"No doubt you've seen Kearney," he said.

"And heard him." She was trying to keep the anxiety out of her voice but he still felt it. "What on earth did you do it for?"

"It was the only thing I could do, baby. I couldn't run down this character who's impersonating me if Alvin had me in the hoosegow, and if I don't run him down I can't clear myself. It's a stock situation straight out of any pulp detective story, but it can happen."

"But what's this about Vincent Maxted?"

"Well, apparently my *alter ego* is expanding his business."

"Can't I meet you somewhere?" she said.

"Darling, it's a sure bet that Kearney'll have you followed, hoping for just that."

"Then you don't really think any of the tricks you've taught me for losing a shadow are any good."

The Saint sighed.

"All right," he said. "I'll meet you at the Delphian Theatre."

There was a perceptible pause before she said: "Have you gone out of your mind?"

"No," said the Saint. "But I was invited to a rehearsal, and I happened to remember that Iris Freeman was once Mrs. Vincent Maxted."

He took a taxi to the theatre and turned on the radio. He found a local news broadcast, and had the ambiguous satisfaction of hearing his own name on a last-minute flash just before the commercial.

"Must be quite a guy, that Saint," said the driver chattily.

"He'd better be," Simon agreed.

There was no janitor at the stage door, and he found his way unchallenged to the stage. Voices grew louder as he approached it, and presently he stopped in the shadow of some stacked scenery and listened.

The rehearsal seemed to be justifying some of Stratford Keane's gloomy prognostications. The voice of Macbeth, declaiming, did not even have the lush rotundity of Keane's:

"Is this a dagger which I see
before me,
The handle toward my hand?
Come, let me clutch thee.
I have thee not, and yet I see
thee still.
Art thou, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling as to sight—"

There was a soft footfall behind him, and he turned and saw Patricia at his shoulder.

"Hullo," she whispered. "What's going on?"

"Hush," he said. "This is what Stratford was weeping about."

". . . Now o'er the one'half world
Nature seems dead, and wicked
dreams abuse
The curtain'd sleep; now witch-
craft celebrates
Pale Hecate's offerings, and
wither'd murder,
Alarum'd by his sentinel—"

"No, no, no!" moaned the anguished voice of Stratford Keane, further off in the hollow of the empty auditorium. "I can't stand it! Belden, you're beating those lines with a club! A bludgeon!"

"Oh, dry up," Iris Freeman said, from the stage. "I think Mark is doing wonderfully."

Stratford Keane's groan reverberated like the plaint of a wounded bull.

"*You* think! Ye gods, what have I done to deserve this? I, Stratford Keane, who have striven all my life to learn understanding and patience! Even Job was at last tried too far, and I am not Job. . . . You think Belden is doing wonderfully. That is too much. You may direct this play, Miss Freeman." His voice was louder but still further off. "I resign. I'm through!"

In the distance a door slammed.

There was an uneasy silence on the stage for a few moments, and then Iris Freeman said with weary disgust, "Oh, for crying out loud! Again?"

"Exit Stratford, pursued by a bear," Belden said sepulchrally.

And then suddenly the voice of Stratford Keane boomed out again with remarkable verisimilitude: "Ye gods, what have I done to deserve this? I, Stratford Keane, who have striven all my life to learn understanding and patience!"

There was a general chorus of laughter.

Patricia's fingers tightened on the Saint's arm.

"Simon! Did you notice—"

"Stratford didn't really do him justice," said the Saint.

On the stage, Iris Freeman was saying: "Better run along, kids. You'll probably be called back as usual after Mr. Keane cools off."

In a little while the footsteps and voices of the rest of the cast died away and the theatre was silent again. The Saint held Patricia motionless in the shadows. Then Iris Freeman spoke again with a rather tired relaxation.

"You know, Mark, this sometimes seems like doing it the hard way."

"Don't worry, honey," Belden said. "As soon as I collect a few more touches with the dope you're giving me about the people who've used Rick in their various operations—why, I'll be all set to back the show myself. Then you can divorce him and we can be married."

"But suppose something goes wrong. And if Rick ever finds out—"

"How can he? And if anything ever does go wrong, the Saint gets it in the neck. Don't forget we've got that piece of paper now with his signature and his fingerprints all over it. We can type anything we like over his name and plant it where it'll do the most good."

Simon Templar released Patricia and strolled out on to the stage. He was cool and unhurried, putting a cigarette in his mouth and lighting it as he moved, so easy and natural that the shock of his entrance only held the other two in a kind of misty trance.

"That's a great idea, children," he murmured, "only it doesn't solve any of my problems." His voice sharpened suddenly as Belden started to come out of his freeze. "Don't try anything, Mark. I want you to be able to talk when Lieutenant Kearney gets here. Pat, do you think you could find a 'phone?"

"Don't bother," Kearney said. His angular figure emerged from the shadows on the other side of the stage, and Mark Belden watched him approach in a new and even deeper trance from which even the click of a handcuff on his wrist did not arouse him.

Iris Freeman was less ready to give up. She struggled furiously for one hectic moment before Kearney snapped the other cuff on her wrist, where it made a tasteful contrast with her jewel bracelets.

"You can't do this to me," she panted.

"I can try my best," said the detective. "From what I heard, it sounds like a clear case of conspiracy to me."

"Don't let it get you down, darling," said the Saint. "Cross your legs on the witness stand, and the jury will probably see everything your way. On the other hand, I'm afraid Rick may not be so easy."

What Iris Freeman said cannot be printed without grave risk to the publisher.

Simon and Patricia strolled south on Michigan Avenue in a rather noticeable silence.

"Kearney was pretty nice about you, wasn't he?" said Patricia at last.

"He's not a bad guy," Simon agreed. "And he's got something to thank me for. Getting the real blackmailers ought to be worth more to him than trying to hang a shaky rap on me. . . . Of course,

it started to be obvious as soon as Iris showed up as a connecting link.

"It would have been too much for her to imitate my voice, but the only thing left was to identify her stooge. It occurred to me at once that we couldn't rely on Stratford Keane's definition of Belden. A ham like Keane wouldn't know the difference between one vaudeville performer and another, but I'll bet Belden wasn't a hoofer. I'll bet he was one of those dreadful acts which start: 'I would like to give you my impression of . . .' I always wanted to see something unpleasant happen to that kind of artist, but I never hoped I should have the chance to arrange it."

There was a further silence.

"Now," said Patricia with difficulty, "I suppose you're only waiting to tell me that you knew all along I wouldn't shake Kearney off."

"I was betting on it," said the Saint blandly. "And I owe you a lot for your co-operation." He turned and hailed a passing taxi. "However, I shall let Rick the Barber contribute to your reward. Things may not be too happy for him when Iris blows her top, as she probably will, and I think Rick ought to pay us quite well for a tip-off."

FRAGILE HELL CAT

Among the myths destroyed in the past decade has been the myth of the fragile femme, clinging to a slightly shaky pedestal but still up there, smiling bravely. But with women competing with men as judo experts, pilots, welders and policemen, competition has been inevitable in still another field—crime. Brutal, savagely cruel, almost sadistic crime.

Take the case of demure Sophie A., described as having the face of an angel, the vocabulary of an ill-tempered mule skinner, and a figure that would stop traffic. Soon after a frustrated probation officer described her as "Hell bent," fifteen-year-old Sophie—now Sandra—was working as a shill in gambling houses and then a dice girl in other joints, finally hitting Texas where she went in business as a bandit girl hitch-hiker. Victims, when they did report what had happened to them, would describe her as a gun-toting hell cat, "spitting fire and brimstone," when annoyed.

Two days before the murder which brought a halt to her career, she had persuaded a fourteen-year-old girl to run away with her, promising her a lot of excitement. During the next forty-eight hours the girls committed two holdups, Sandra finally shooting a West Texas businessman who'd given them a lift, using a gun she'd stolen from a soldier the day before.

The girl held court in her cell on her 18th birthday, in December, 1949, posing for pictures—until news came that, now that she was of legal age, the district attorney would ask for a first degree murder indictment.

Sandra will be eligible for parole around 1969—perhaps. . . .

frankie and various johnnies

by . . . Stewart Sterling

They were genuinely fond of each other, but this did not prevent the murder and all which happened afterwards.

AMERICA'S most spectacular murderess was a gaudy Borgia called, among other things, Frances Helene Poinsett. She cut a swath through her native Kansas which no McCormick reaper has since equalled. This beautiful bawd was, on the record, completely devoid of morals and incomparably equipped with physical appeal. Beyond which she possessed, undeniably, a curious personal magnetism capable of warping the minds of honest and sober men beyond their good judgment.

This fascinating strumpet was spawned in Erie, Kansas, in June, 1854, the same year in which Congress voted to make a territory out of those rich prairies and by reason of which act the region became for seven bitter years a bloody cockpit where the slavery issue was battled out inconclusively before the Civil War began.

Her father was a Pennsylvania man, one of those pioneering '49ers who never quite made it out to the gold fields. Or perhaps he did make it sometime after his daughter was born; he disappears from the pages of local history shortly after that event. The be-

Frankie and Johnnie have passed into the mythology of our times—ballet as well as vocal—without our quite realizing that they were real people. Stewart Sterling, veteran mystery novelist, author of the recent CANDLE FOR A CORPSE *(Lippincott), reports on this item of basic Americana.*

reaved, or possibly abandoned, mother was of sturdier stock, though not nearly—as it turned out—sturdy enough to cope with her offspring. Yet there was, or seemed to be, up to the very moment of tragedy, a genuine affection between daughter and mother.

It must have been a rugged childhood; the child was reared amidst terrors of the night riders, barn burnings, killings. She would have been only two when the Border Ruffians sacked Lawrence and John Brown made his grisly raid on Pottowatamie Creek. Erie, down in the southwestern part of the state, was close enough to the Missouri border to have its share of frightening alarums and exciting excursions. Then there were the long ugly war years . . . and the period of loose living which followed release from the strains and tensions.

Not too great a wonder that Frances had not yet reached her teens when a mustered-out Union cavalryman began her education with, as she later boasted, her enthusiastic consent. By 1869, at fifteen, she was already, according to the scanty accounts available concerning her youth, an accomplished professional. Many of her customers at that time were railroad workmen who lodged at the boarding house run by her mother.

If the records of her blossoming days—if that expression may be used with regard to one so early deflowered—were sparse, there is no lack of authentic corroboration for her later exploits.

At twenty-five she hit the bustling city of Topeka like—we quote an anonymous newsman on a local paper—"a bombshell." She was indeed a striking blonde; it was perhaps the first use of this term which Hollywood publicity men were to overwork so many years later.

No photographs have been left for purposes of comparison with modern pin-up pretties. But she was "tall, graceful and comely" reported the newspapermen at her trial; presumably the terms would have been the equivalent of the GI "long-stemmed and well stacked." Blue, baby-doll eyes. A complexion like pale pink rose leaves. Naturally curly, cornsilk hair. A glorious smile. There was no mention of morals which would have made Messalina blush for shame.

But Frankie's character did not, at first, enter into the press reports of her Topeka activities. She had come to the State Capitol under the most auspicious circumstances: as the wife of one of the section's most able and well-liked young attorneys. With *Mrs. Arthur Hurd* engraved on her visiting cards, she was naturally accepted in the best homes, welcomed by the first families.

Moreover, it was clear that Local Boy Had Made Good Catch . . . for this young widow he had met in Great Bend, another small Kansas town, seemed to be rich.

Rich and free with her money. Add to a charming beauty the lustre of great wealth, throw in for good measure an almost hypnotic personality . . . who could blame the leaders of a small-city society for taking Mrs. Hurd to their hearts and hearths?

Nobody inquired, at first, where the widow . . . she had called herself Mrs. Frankie Morris when the brilliant young lawyer first met her . . . had obtained her money. It was assumed that the unfortunate Mr. Morris had been well-fixed and foresighted. In point of truth, he had merely been non-existent. A myth to make a Mrs.

But the young matron seemed modest and reticent enough about her supposed previous husband to create just the right impression. For more than a year the newly-weds lived it up in high style. They entertained extensively; there was no more popular couple in the city. The big house which Mr. Hurd had bought with his wife's funds was seldom dark until after midnight. Liquor flowed lavishly; some of it flowed from bottles with fancy, imported labels.

The references in the society columns beginning "Among the many guests at the beautiful home of Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Hurd" might have continued indefinitely if Mr. Hurd had not, one August evening, during a sumptuous garden party, come unexpectedly upon his wife and one of the town's most prominent undertakers embracing in a secluded corner where the hedge ran close beside the carriage house. It is not known whether Arthur had missed his spouse and—having inside information as to her background—become suspicious. But it was stated positively, in court afterward, that he had discovered the pair *in flagrante*.

Harsh words were heard, revealing words . . . heard by other guests. Frankie, her husband roared—by now the "Frances" had been dropped in favor of the friendlier diminutive, all over town—had been reverting to her alley-cat instincts. She was behaving, he bellowed, as only a bed-house wench would act. She was what he had known her to be all along . . . a faithless trollop.

Possibly Arthur regretted his remarks later; at any rate he did not file suit for divorce right away. But the damage to the society belle's reputation was done. Whispers became sly gossip; gossip sought confirmation. And found a-plenty.

Shortly the disclosures began to close formerly hospitable doors to the Hurds; the facts were that the upright legal light had met the widow Morris at the popular house the lady had formerly operated in Great Bend, Kansas. Not only operated but—when the mood struck her (and by all reports it struck her fairly frequently) had helped out with the

customers during rush hours. There were stories, too, that she had been, prior to opening her own establishment, the leading lady in a Dodge City establishment.

It was all true. Frankie never denied a word of it. Never even contradicted the rumor that she had fled from Erie after using a hacksaw on one of her early patrons who had been obtaining her favors on a credit basis and failed to come through with an installment payment. Or the other rumor that her departure from the Dodge City hot-pillow palace had followed her making good on a wager that she could put a revolver bullet through the ear of a certain deputy sheriff who had (so she claimed) slandered her, and have it come out through his other ear.

Other sinister tales began to be heard in Topeka's barrooms and boudoirs. That Frankie had been caught running the badger game in Wichita and had only escaped conviction by cozening up to the chief of police. That she was known to carry in her reticule, always, a small packet of white powder—which she had, on occasion, used with lethal effect on certain well-heeled patrons who were shortly afterward found dead in most embarrassing circumstances so that their families were only too glad to hush the matter up.

But one story never did go the rounds. No one, publicly at least, offered any plausible explanation of how this hussy had managed to entrap a respectable and ambitious young man like Hurd into matrimony. It became clear that he had known her for what she was, that he had been in the habit of visiting her place of business in Great Bend over a prolonged period before the wedding day had been set. He had been, therefore, well aware that he—or any other man with the price—could pile up with her at any time without the necessity of going through a legally binding ceremony. Yet he did marry her; the inescapable conclusion is that he was madly in love.

Moreover, she was equally enamored of him—in spite of her evident eagerness to accommodate any passionate male who happened to be handy. For, while the rumor-pot was bubbling most fiercely, Frankie tried in desperation to hold her man by pulling out of the bag one of the oldest tricks known to her sex.

On the pretext of having been made ill by the snubs and slanders of those who had been so eager to partake of her hospitality, she made a visit to a health sanitarium at Hot Springs, Kansas. There she stayed for several months, meantime sending coy intimations back to her estranged husband that she was "expecting."

What she was expecting was the cooperation of a well-known and highly reputable physician at

the resort. This doctor made frequent and prolonged visits to Frankie's bedside . . . and her bedside manner must have made a powerful appeal. For the good doctor—you will see presently that she had a way with men of medicine—risked his professional career to obtain for her a baby born out of wedlock to another of his patients (a Miss Foster). This infant he certified as the legitimate offspring of Mrs. Arthur Hurd.

Shortly after the *accouchement,* Frankie returned to Topeka, to an adoring, if temporarily bamboozled, father. The boy was named—believe it if you can—Johnny!

Whether the father had, from the first, his private reservations about the paternity of the infant—he made no accusation in that connection in his subsequent depositions—or whether he simply became increasingly aware that his stunning helpmate was no longer an asset to his professional ambitions but on the contrary, a serious handicap, matters little in the light of what followed.

He sued for a divorce. But he had to be circumspect, of necessity. So far as the papers filed were concerned, one would almost have thought that he had been the one who was "doing her wrong." He must have been afraid of arousing resentment sufficient to make her reveal certain incidents at the Great Bend *maison de joie.* So in the records there are agreements and stipulations concerning his intention to pay her generous alimony. And since he was then by way of becoming one of the principal attorneys for the Acheson, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad, Frankie seemed to have made a good deal, considering that she had been the one found out by the carriage house.

There is, of course, the odd chance that Mr. Hurd could not be sure that Johnny was *not* his son . . . and was prepared to pay for that possibility.

However, Frankie was never content with living on a modest scale . . . if you find a *double entendre* there, make the most of it. She had become used to high living; she meant to lay her hands on funds sufficient to keep her in the style to which she had become accustomed.

Casting around for feasible ways and means, what more natural than that she should think of her child's poor old grandmother? After all, if Frankie were to continue in the line of work in which she had most experience, she would need a baby-sitter.

At that time, Mrs. Nancy J. Poinsett, then close to sixty, was running a two-bit boarding house at Cherryvale, Kansas. Frankie had not seen much of her mother during the heydays of the busy house in Great Bend, even less during the dizzy social spin in Topeka. Now, Frankie informed her mother, she would make up for the neglect. She would look

after "good ol' ma" from there in. To the mother, it was almost too good to be true. Still, she was at an age when she wanted a rest. She was willing to be convinced, though pardonably skeptical.

Frankie had no sooner received the divorce papers separating her from Arthur than she set about ending the separation from "good ol' ma." She was confident of getting her ex-husband to help her take care of her mother . . . so confident that she staked her life on it.

She resumed her mythical name of Morris. Her next step was to get Arthur to apply for and obtain for her, through his good offices, a $5,000 insurance policy on her mother's life, the face value of the policy being payable to Frankie. Moreover, she had Arthur make the first premium payment out of the bank draft for her first alimony payment! The policy, with the Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York, went through with no trouble.

A couple of days after she had the signed policy in her possession, Frankie shook the dust of Topeka from her lacy petticoats and moved, with Johnny, to Kansas City. As soon as she was settled, she appeared at the Kansas City offices of the Equitable Life Assurance Society of New York, asking for a further $10,000 policy on her mother's life, with herself and child as proposed beneficiaries. With Arthur's help, the policy was issued late in the fall of 1884, the premium paid, again out of alimony.

Frankie then induced "poor ol' ma" to move from Cherryvale to Kansas City, "to help look after Johnny." The stage was set. The curtain went up on a melodrama so implausible no dramatist would have considered it for a moment, as material.

Kansas City was stirred, that fall, by the presidential election. There had been bad feelings between Democrats and Republicans for some time as the aftermath of the Tilden-Hayes set-to four years earlier when the papers had announced Tilden's victory much as Hughes' victory over Wilson and Dewey's defeat of Truman were to be heralded years later . . . with the same morning-after overturn. Tilden's victory in popular votes, with the Congress ruling along party lines on the results in four contested states, didn't go down well with Kansas Democrats. So, when Cleveland came in a winner that November of 1884, there was a general air of jubilation among the local Democrats. Now Frankie, who played the field in her private life, was, politically speaking, single-minded. She was a rabid Cleveland partisan.

So there is no reason to suspect that she intended anything more than a genuine celebration when she sent out a local grocer's boy for several bottles of beer. Nor

any cause to believe she meant harm in asking her mother to drink a toast to the new president-elect.

In view of the testimony afterward, concerning the cordial good terms between mother and daughter—the warm affection between grandmother and grandson Johnny, one has no choice except to believe that the dreadful deed had long been planned and all that was waiting was the choice of timing. When the boy returned with the beer, Frankie—hilariously happy about Cleveland's triumph—decided the time had come.

She took a glass from the kitchen cupboard, holding her hand cupped around the bottom of the tumbler. She filled the glass with beer and handed it to her mother. "Drink up, Ma. To a Democrat in the White House at last." Then she daintily tilted the bottle to her own lips while the grocer's boy lingered.

Mrs. Poinsett gulped down the foamy brew. Two minutes later, just after the errand boy had departed, she complained of feeling badly . . . and the boy—at the bottom of the stairs—heard her. But he heard no more, for he went back to his store; he was not within earshot while the old lady must have groaned in agony. Frankie said later she had supposed her mother was simply suffering from "gas on the stomach." But for fifteen minutes she sat and watched her mother writhe . . . before she called in a doctor.

Half an hour after he came, Mrs. Poinsett's toes were turned up forever. And if this ordinarily decent G.P. noticed anything symptomatic of arsenical poisoning, he made no statement to that effect. But he did sign the death certificate signifying the agonies were due to natural causes. Also he did undeniably visit Frankie late at night on several occasions immediately thereafter; a fact which, on being discovered later, nearly resulted in his indictment as an accessory by the grand jury.

By then, naturally, Frankie had good reason to feel she could get away with anything. She must have been confident that she had everything, especially the attending physician, well under control. There could have been no other explanation for the indecent haste with which she applied for the payment of the policies, on the day after her mother was buried in one of the cheapest lots in the cemetery.

Naturally the insurance companies became suspicious. An investigation was started, court orders obtained, the body of the old lady exhumed.

A professor of chemistry in the State University at Lawrence—Dr. E. H. S. Bailey—made an analysis of the stomach, liver and other viscera. He found arsenic in sufficient quantity to "bring death very quickly."

Frankie pressed for payment of the policies, saying nothing in her own defense. The insurance companies stood pat.

The grand jury met, considered the testimony of Dr. Bailey, brought in a true bill for murder. By one of those tragi-comic coincidences with which criminal history is studded, the case came to trial in Frankie's birthplace, Erie, on the Fourth of August, 1885.

The evidence against her seemed ironclad. It was ably presented in the Neosho County courtroom by the prosecutor, C. A. Cox, and his assistant, C. F. Hutchings. Judge Stillwell, presiding, was painstakingly fair. The trial lasted a week.

Frankie made a flat denial of guilt. But the weight of the testimony—the boy who had brought the beer and who described how Frankie had drunk from the bottle while making her mother take the glassful—the attending physician, now terrified lest he be accused as an accomplice—the expert chemist—all this weight was enough to bear the scales of justice far down against her. The jury brought in a verdict of guilty with no recommendation for clemency.

One would have thought that would have been the end of it, or at least the end of Frankie Morris . . . the name under which she underwent trial.

But one would have been wrong. Frankie had secured competent and highly impressive counsel . . . members of the law firm representing the Acheson, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad—with ex-husband Arthur at the helm. She was to need their skilled help in escaping from the death sentence . . . but the master stroke which was to knock aside the verdict was her own.

She took the stand in her own defense. Prosecutor Cox tried to show that she was not a reliable witness in her own behalf, because of her background. Frankie admitted she had been a prostitute and a good one. She taunted the prosecutor, suggesting he perhaps did not have enough manhood to know what she meant. He flared back at her before the Court could stop him.

The young and able prosecutor was infuriated; she baited him with questions of her own.

Had he never patronized a house of prostitution? Had he never gone to bed with any woman other than his wife? If so, did that disqualify him in a court of alleged justice? Was there, in fact, one man present in the court who had not "had relations" out of wedlock? Was it any worse for a woman to take money for her favors than for a man, say, such as the prosecutor to give it? And so on . . . and on . . .

The onlookers in the court relished it . . . the prosecutor saw himself being made to look a fool. In his summing up to the jury he exceeded all legal bounds, calling

her a monstrous harlot, a woman devoid of shame or soul, a blot on the fair name of womanhood. And the jury agreed with him; the twelve good men and true . . . possibly with some guilty twinges of their own consciences . . . brought in the verdict he asked.

Whereupon, the verdict being in, the lawyers for the defense—ex-husband Hurd's co-counsel, appealed the verdict, moving to have it set aside because of inflammatory and defamatory remarks made by Mr. Cox and having nothing whatever to do with the accusation of murder in the first degree.

It took a little time for the higher court to agree that the aggravated prosecutor had overstepped the bounds of courtroom decency and used expressions unwarrantably prejudiced to the defendant. Frankie and ex-mate Hurd used the time . . . to the end of November . . . to good advantage. When the case came up for retrial, neither the boy who had brought in the beer and seen the glass passed, nor the susceptible general practitioner, could be found in the State of Kansas.

With two of his principal witnesses missing, the by-now cautious Cox gave up in despair. A *nolle prosequi* was entered on the records. Frankie beamed, kissed her hand at the judge, grinned provocatively at Cox . . . and walked out of court on the arm of her ex-husband, a free woman.

There was a postscript to the case. It was written by Mr. D. C. Gillette of the Mutual Life and Major T. C. Caskin, representing the Equitable Life and was addressed to the unfortunate Cox:

In your own good time and according to your opportunities, you led this case from the presumption attending the circumstances of Mrs. Poinsett's death to the indictment, arraignment, trial and conviction of her daughter for murder. We asked no more of you than the people or than all good citizens have a right to expect—that you should do your duty. And you did it nobly in accordance with the forms of law and the usages of the courts.

. . .There was not an intimation that the accused was not guilty. The honored court saw no evidence, no error of law, no virtue in the exceptions cited, no admission of irrelevant testimony upon which a new trial could be granted; but out of his memory his Honor plucked the tardy consciousness of opprobrious epithets and expressions employed by the prosecution when addressing the jury, which though not objected to at the time by either court or counsel, were "outside the record and had a tendency to prejudice the jury against the accused."

When, since there were trials, has it not been the sworn duty of prosecuting officers to find cause of conviction and to press that

cause with all their might upon the jury? Or when did previous good or bad character of the accused cease to furnish the strongest presumption of innocence or guilt?

We are not surprised at the tales we hear of your discouragement when you see the fabric of your great labor for right and law fallen to ashes . . . (but) the time will come when crime will not excite admiration; when criminals will not hold receptions in gorgeous toilettes and trip gayly to their homes after kissing their hand to the judge and jury!

A further P.S. appeared in the editorial columns of the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch:*

Frankie Morris, formerly an inmate of a cowboy dance house at Dodge City, a woman whose life has been notoriously wicked, was convicted by the most conclusive evidence and by unanimous verdict of an unprejudiced jury in Kansas of having provided her old mother with arsenic to obtain $15,000 of life insurance which she had taken out on the old woman's life. Obtaining a new trial on some flimsy pretense, her friends have managed to get two of the most important witnesses against her out of reach of the State authorities and the prosecution has had to dismiss the case against her. Thus justice is baffled and defeated in one of the clearest cases of murder in the annals of crime.

The final postscript, however, lies in an obituary from a since-defunct Topeka daily: the date, *April 12, 1887.*

Died, at Shawnee County Poor Farm, Mrs. Frank Morris, aged 33, of pneumonia. A son, John F. Hurd, survives.

The alimony payments must have been swallowed up by the cost of getting the witnesses out of town. Frankie had evidently been afraid to go into court again to press her claim against the insurance companies.

And the companies had continued to stand pat.

SUBVERSIVE TYPEWRITERS

When typewriters began to come into general use, towards the end of the last century, the Sultan prohibited the possession of typewriters within Turkey's borders.

The reason? Simple! The typewriter would make it easier for disloyal citizens to write "seditious communications," hiding behind the anonymity (as seen at the time) of the typed alias.

fatal ruby

by . . . R. Austin Freeman

"A RATHER curious neighborhood this, Jervis," my friend Thorndyke remarked as we turned into Upper Bedford Place; "a sort of temporary aviary for cosmopolitan birds of passage, especially those of the Oriental variety. The Asiatic and African faces that one sees at the windows of these Bloomsbury boarding-houses almost suggest an overflow from the ethnographical galleries of the adjacent British Museum."

"Yes," I agreed, "there must be quite a considerable population of Africans, Japanese and Hindus in Bloomsbury; particularly Hindus."

As I spoke, and as if in illustration of my statement a dark-skinned man rushed out of one of the houses farther down the street and began to advance towards us in a rapid, bewildered fashion, stopping to look at each street door as he came to it. His hatless condition—though he was exceedingly well dressed—and his agitated manner immediately attracted my attention, and Thorndyke's too, for the latter re-

Thorndyke's eyes were alert. He pointed to the right ear, in the hollow of which a few drops of blood had collected.

As Leslie Charteris writes elsewhere, many consider Dr. Thorndyke as great a literary milestone as Sherlock Holmes. Struck, while still a medical student, with the material for fiction to be found in medical jurisprudence, Dr. Freeman developed, after his retirement from the Colonial Service, a new type of detective novel built around a medico-legal expert and based largely on his personal experiences in England and Africa.

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marked, "Our friend seems to be in trouble. An accident, perhaps, or a case of sudden illness."

Here the stranger, observing our approach, ran forward to meet us and asked in an agitated tone, "Can you tell me, please, where I can find a doctor?"

"I am a medical man," replied Thorndyke, "and so is my friend."

Our acquaintance grasped Thorndyke's sleeve and exclaimed eagerly:

"Come with me, then, quickly if you please. A most dreadful thing has happened."

He hurried us along at something between a trot and a quick walk, and as we proceeded he continued excitedly, "I am quite confused and terrified; it is all so strange and sudden and terrible."

"Try," said Thorndyke, "to calm yourself a little and tell us what has happened."

"I will," was the agitated reply. "It is my cousin, Dinanath Byramji—his surname is the same as mine. Just now I went to his room and was horrified to find him lying on the floor, staring at the ceiling and blowing—like this," and he puffed out his cheeks with a soft blowing noise. "I spoke to him and shook his hand, but he was like a dead man. This is the house."

He darted up the steps to an open door at which a rather scared page-boy was on guard, and running along the hall, rapidly ascended the stairs. Following him closely, we reached a rather dark first-door landing where, at a half-open door, a servant-maid stood listening with an expression of awe to a rhythmical snoring sound that issued from the room.

The unconscious man lay as Mr. Byramji had said, staring fixedly at the ceiling with wide-open, glazy eyes, puffing out his cheeks slightly at each breath. But the breathing was shallow and slow, and it grew perceptibly slower, with lengthening pauses. And even as I was timing it with my watch while Thorndyke examined the pupils with the aid of a wax match, it stopped. I laid my finger on the wrist and caught one or two slow, flickering beats. Then the pulse stopped too.

"He is gone," said I. "He must have burst one of the large arteries."

"Apparently," said Thorndyke, "though one would not have expected it at his age. But wait! What is this?"

He pointed to the right ear, in the hollow of which a few drops of blood had collected, and as he spoke he drew his hand gently over the dead man's head and moved it slightly from side to side.

"There is a fracture of the base of the skull," said he, "and quite distinct signs of contusion of the scalp." He turned to Mr. Byramji, who stood wringing his hands and gazing incredulously at the dead man, and asked:

"Can you throw any light on this?"

The Indian looked at him vacantly. The sudden tragedy seemed to have paralyzed his brain. "I don't understand," said he. "What does it mean?"

"It means," replied Thorndyke, "that he has received a heavy blow on the head."

For a few moments Mr. Byramji continued to stare vacantly at my colleague. Then he seemed suddenly to realize the import of Thorndyke's reply, for he started up excitedly and turned to the door, outside which the two servants were hovering.

"Where is the person gone who came in with my cousin?" he demanded.

"You saw him go out, Albert," said the maid. "Tell Mr. Byramji where he went to."

The page tiptoed into the room with a fearful eye fixed on the corpse, and replied falteringly, "I only see the back of him as he went out, and all I know is that he turned to the left. P'raps he's gone for a doctor."

"Can you give us any description of him?" asked Thorndyke.

"I only see the back of him," repeated the page. "He was a shortish gentleman and he had on a dark suit of clothes and a hard felt hat. That's all I know."

"Thank you," said Thorndyke. "We may want to ask you some more questions presently," and having conducted the page to the door, he shut it and turned to Mr. Byramji.

"Have you any idea who it was that was with your cousin?" he asked.

"None at all," was the reply. "I was sitting in my room opposite, writing, when I heard my cousin come up the stairs with another person, to whom he was talking. I could not hear what he was saying. They went into his room—this room—and I could occasionally catch the sound of their voices. In about a quarter of an hour I heard the door open and shut, and then someone went downstairs, softly and rather quickly. I finished the letter that I was writing, and when I had addressed it I came in here to ask my cousin who the visitor was. I thought it might be someone who had come to negotiate for the ruby."

"The ruby!" exclaimed Thorndyke. "What ruby do you refer to?"

"The great ruby," replied Byramji. "But of course you have not—" He broke off suddenly and stood for a few moments staring at Thorndyke with parted lips and wide-open eyes; then abruptly he turned, and kneeling beside the dead man he began, in a curious, caressing, half-apologetic manner, first to pass his hand gently over the body at the waist and then to unfasten the clothes. This brought into view a handsome, soft leather belt, evidently

of native workmanship, worn next to the skin and furnished with three pockets. Mr. Byramji unbuttoned and explored them in quick succession, and it was evident that they were all empty.

"It is gone!" he exclaimed in low, intense tones. "Gone! Ah! But how little would it signify! But thou, dear Dinanath, my brother, my friend, thou art gone, too!"

He lifted the dead man's hand and pressed it to his cheek, murmuring endearments in his own tongue. Presently he laid it down reverently, and sprang up, and I was startled at the change in his aspect. The delicate, gentle, refined face had suddenly become the face of a Fury—fierce, sinister, vindictive.

"This wretch must die!" he exclaimed huskily. "This sordid brute who, without compunction, has crushed out a precious life as one would carelessly crush a fly, for the sake of a paltry crystal—he must die, if I have to follow him and strangle him with my own hands!"

Thorndyke laid his hand on Byramji's shoulder. "I sympathize with you most cordially," said he. "If it is as you think, and appearances suggest, that your cousin has been murdered as a mere incident of robbery, the murderer's life is forfeit, and Justice cries aloud for retribution. The fact of murder will be determined, for or against, by a proper inquiry. Meanwhile we have to ascertain who this unknown man is and what happened while he was with your cousin."

Byramji made a gesture of despair. "But the man has disappeared, and nobody has seen him! What can we do?"

"Let us look around us," replied Thorndyke, "and see if we can judge what has happened in this room. What, for instance, is this?"

He picked up from a corner near the door a small leather object, which he handed to Mr. Byramji. The Indian seized it eagerly, exclaiming:

"Ah! It is the little bag in which my cousin used to carry the ruby. So he had taken it from his belt."

"It hasn't been dropped, by any chance?" I suggested.

In an instant Mr. Byramji was down on his knees, peering and groping about the floor, and Thorndyke and I joined in the search.

But, as might have been expected, there was no sign of the ruby, nor, indeed, of anything else, excepting a hat which I picked up from under the table.

"No," said Mr. Byramji, rising with a dejected air. "It is gone—of course it is gone, and the murderous villain—"

Here his glance fell on the hat, which I had laid on the table, and he bent forward to look at it.

"Whose hat is this?" he demanded, glancing at the chair on

which Thorndyke's hat and mine had been placed.

"Is it not your cousin's?" asked Thorndyke.

"No, certainly not. His hat was like mine—we bought them both together. It had a white silk lining with his initials, D.B., in gold. This has no lining and is a much older hat. It must be the murderer's hat."

"If it is," said Thorndyke, "that is a most important fact—important in two respects. Could you let us see your hat?"

"Certainly," replied Byramji, walking quickly, but with a soft tread, to the door. As he went out, shutting the door silently behind him, Thorndyke picked up the derelict hat and swiftly tried it on the head of the dead man. As far as I could judge, it appeared to fit, and this Thorndyke confirmed as he replaced it on the table.

"As you see," said he, "it is at least a practicable fit, which is a fact of some significance."

Here Mr. Byramji returned with his own hat, which he placed on the table by the side of the other, and thus placed, crown uppermost, the two hats were closely similar. Both were black, hard felts of the prevalent "bowler" shape, and of good quality, and the difference in their age and state of preservation was not striking; but when Byramji turned them over and exhibited their interiors it was seen that whereas the strange hat was unlined save for the leather headband, Byramji's had a white silk lining and bore the owner's initials in embossed gilt letters.

"What happened," said Thorndyke, when he had carefully compared the two hats, "seems fairly obvious. The two men, on entering, placed their hats crown upwards on the table. In some way—perhaps during a struggle—the visitor's hat was knocked down and rolled under the table. Then the stranger, on leaving, picked up the only visible hat—almost identically similar to his own—and put it on."

"Is it not rather singular," I asked, "that he should not have noticed the different feel of a strange hat?"

"I think not," Thorndyke replied. "If he noticed anything unusual he would probably assume that he had put it on the wrong way round. Remember that he would be extremely hurried and agitated. And when once he had left the house he would not dare to take the risk of returning, though he would doubtless realize the gravity of the mistake. And now," he continued, "would you mind giving us a few particulars? You have spoken of a great ruby, which your cousin had, and which seems to be missing."

"Yes. You shall come to my room and I will tell you about it;

but first let us lay my poor cousin decently on his bed."

"I think," said Thorndyke, "the body ought not to be moved until the police have seen it."

"Perhaps you are right," Byramji agreed reluctantly, "though it seems callous to leave him lying there." With a sigh he turned to the door, and Thorndyke followed, carrying the two hats.

"My cousin and I," said our host, when we were seated in his own large bed-sitting room, "were both interested in gemstones. I deal in all kinds of stones that are found in the East, but Dinanath dealt almost exclusively in rubies. He was a very fine judge of those beautiful gems, and he used to make periodical tours in Burma in search of uncut rubies of unusual size or quality. About four months ago he acquired at Mogok, in Upper Burma, a magnificent specimen over twenty-eight carats in weight, perfectly flawless and of the most gorgeous color. It had been roughly cut, but my cousin was intending to have it recut unless he should receive an advantageous offer for it in the meantime."

"What would be the value of such a stone?" I asked.

"It is impossible to say. A really fine large ruby of perfect color is far, far more valuable than the finest diamond of the same size. It is the most precious of all gems, with the possible exception of the emerald. A fine ruby of five carats is worth about three thousand pounds, but, of course, the value rises out of all proportion with increasing size. Fifty thousand pounds would be a moderate price for Dinanath's ruby."

During this recital I noticed that Thorndyke, while listening attentively, was turning the stranger's hat over in his hands, narrowly scrutinizing it both inside and outside. As Byramji concluded, he remarked:

"We shall have to let the police know what has happened, but, as my friend and I will be called as witnesses, I should like to examine this hat a little more closely before you hand it over to them. Could you let me have a small, hard brush? A dry nail-brush would do."

Our host complied readily—in fact eagerly. Thorndyke's authoritative, purposeful manner had clearly impressed him, for he said as he handed my colleague a new nail-brush: "I thank you for your help and value it. We must not depend on the police only."

Accustomed as I was to Thorndyke's methods, his procedure was not unexpected, but Mr. Byramji watched him with breathless interest and no little surprise as, laying a sheet of note-paper on the table, he brought the hat close to it and brushed firmly but slowly, so that the dust dislodged should fall on it. As it was not a very well-kept hat, the yield was considerable, especially when the

brush was drawn under the curl of the brim, and very soon the paper held quite a little heap. Then Thorndyke folded the paper into a small packet and having written "outside" on it, put it in his pocketbook.

"Why do you do that?" Mr. Byramji asked. "What will the dust tell you?"

"Probably nothing," Thorndyke replied. "But this hat is our only direct clue to the identity of the man who was with your cousin, and we must make the most of it. Dust, you know, is only a mass of fragments detached from surrounding objects. If the objects are unusual the dust may be quite distinctive. You could easily identify the hat of a miller or a cement worker." As he was speaking he reversed the hat and turned down the leather head-lining, whereupon a number of strips of folded paper fell down into the crown.

"Ah!" exclaimed Byramji, "perhaps we shall learn something now."

He picked out the folded slips and began eagerly to open them out, and we examined them systematically, one by one. But they were singularly disappointing and uninforming. Mostly they consisted of strips of newspaper, with one or two circulars, a leaf from a price list of gas stoves, a portion of a large envelope on which were the remains of an address which read "—n—don, W.C.," and a piece of paper, evidently cut down vertically and bearing the right-hand half of some kind of list. This read:

"—el 3 oz. 5 dwts.
—eep 9½ oz."

"Can you make anything of this?" I asked, handing the paper to Thorndyke.

He looked at it reflectively, and answered, as he copied it into his notebook: "It has, at least, some character. If we consider it with the other data we should get some sort of hint from it. But these scraps of paper don't tell us much. Perhaps their most suggestive feature is their quantity and the way in which, as you have no doubt noticed, they were arranged at the sides of the hat. We had better replace them as we found them for the benefit of the police."

The nature of the suggestion to which he referred was not very obvious to me, but the presence of Mr. Byramji rendered discussion inadvisable; nor was there any opportunity, for we had hardly reconstituted the hat when we became aware of a number of persons ascending the stairs, and then we heard the sound of rather peremptory rapping at the door of the dead man's room.

Mr. Byramji opened the door and went out on to the landing, where several persons had collected, including the two servants and a constable.

"I understand," said the police-

man, "that there is something wrong here. Is that so?"

"A very terrible thing has happened," replied Byramji. "But the doctors can tell you better than I can." Here he looked appealingly at Thorndyke, and we both went out and joined him.

"A gentleman—Mr. Dinanath Byramji—has met with his death under somewhat suspicious circumstances," said Thorndyke, and, glancing at the knot of naturally curious persons on the landing, he continued: "If you will come into the room where the death occurred, I will give you the facts so far as they are known to us."

With this he opened the door and entered the room with Mr. Byramji, the constable, and me. As the door opened, the bystanders craned forward and a middle-aged woman uttered a cry of horror and followed us into the room.

"This is dreadful!" she exclaimed, with a shuddering glance at the corpse. "The servants told me about it when I came in just now and I sent Albert for the police at once. But what does it mean? You don't think poor Mr. Dinanath has been murdered?"

"We had better get the facts, ma'am," said the constable, drawing out a large black notebook and laying his helmet on the table. He turned to Mr. Byramji, who had sunk into a chair and sat, the picture of grief, gazing at his dead cousin. "Would you kindly tell me what you know about how it happened?"

Byramji repeated the substance of what he had told us, and when the constable had taken down his statement, Thorndyke and I gave the few medical particulars that we could furnish and handed the constable our cards. Then, having helped to lay the corpse on the bed and cover it with a sheet, we turned to take our leave.

"You have been very kind," Mr. Byramji said as he shook our hands warmly. "I am more than grateful. Perhaps I may be permitted to call on you and hear if—if you have learned anything fresh," he concluded discreetly.

"We shall be pleased to see you," Thorndyke replied, "and to give you any help that we can"; and with this we took our departure, watched inquisitively down the stairs by the boarders and the servants who still lurked in the vicinity of the chamber of death.

"If the police have no more information than we have," I remarked as we walked homeward, "they won't have much to go on."

"No," said Thorndyke. "But you must remember that this crime—as we are justified in assuming it to be—is not an isolated one. It is the fourth of practically the same kind within the last six months. I understand that the police have some kind of information respecting the presumed criminal, though it can't be worth much, seeing that no arrest has

been made. But there is some new evidence this time. The exchange of hats may help the police considerably."

"In what way? What evidence does it furnish?"

"In the first place it suggests a hurried departure, which seems to connect the missing man with the crime. Then, he is wearing the dead man's hat, and though he is not likely to continue wearing it, it may be seen and furnish a clue. We know that that hat fits him fairly and we know its size, so that we know the size of his head. Finally, we have the man's own hat."

"I don't fancy the police will get much information from that," said I.

"Probably not," he agreed. "Yet it offered one or two interesting suggestions, as you probably observed."

"It made no suggestions whatever to me," said I.

"Then," said Thorndyke, "I can only recommend you to recall our simple inspection and consider the significance of what we found."

This I had to accept as closing the discussion for the time being, and as I had to make a call at my bookseller's concerning some reports that I had left to be bound, I parted from Thorndyke at the corner of Chichester Rents and left him to pursue his way alone.

My business with the bookseller took me longer than I had expected, for I had to wait while the lettering on the backs was completed, and when I arrived at our chambers in King's Bench Walk, I found Thorndyke apparently at the final stage of some experiment evidently connected with our late adventure. The microscope stood on the table with one slide on the stage and a second one beside it; but Thorndyke had apparently finished his microscopical researches, for as I entered he held in his hand a test-tube filled with a smoky-colored fluid.

"I see that you have been examining the dust from the hat," said I. "Does it throw any fresh light on the case?"

"Very little," he replied. "It is just common dust—assorted fibres and miscellaneous organic and mineral particles. But there are a couple of hairs from the inside of the hat—both lightish brown, and one of the atrophic, note-of-exclamation type that one finds at the margin of bald patches; and the outside dust shows minute traces of lead, apparently in the form of oxide. What do you make of that?"

"Perhaps the man is a plumber or a painter," I suggested.

"Either is possible and worth considering," he replied; but his tone made clear to me that this was not his own inference; and a row of five consecutive Post Office Directories, which I had already noticed ranged along the end of the table, told me that he had not

only formed a hypothesis on the subject, but had probably either confirmed or disproved it. For the Post Office Directory was one of Thorndyke's favorite books of reference; and the amount of curious and recondite information that he succeeded in extracting from its matter-of-fact pages would have surprised no one more than it would the compilers of the work.

At this moment the sound of footsteps ascending our stairs became audible. It was late for business callers, but we were not unaccustomed to late visitors; and a familiar rat-tat of our little brass knocker seemed to explain the untimely visit.

"That sounds like Superintendent Miller's knock," said Thorndyke, as he strode across the room to open the door. And the superintendent it turned out to be. But not alone.

As the door opened, the officer entered with two gentlemen, both natives of India, and one of whom was our friend Mr. Byramji.

"Perhaps," said Miller, "I had better look in a little later."

"Not on my account," said Byramji. "I have only a few words to say and there is nothing secret about my business. May I introduce my kinsman, Mr. Khambata, a student of the Inner Temple?"

Byramji's companion bowed ceremoniously. "Byramji came to my chambers just now," he explained, "to consult me about this dreadful affair, and he chanced to show me your card. He had not heard of you, but supposed you to be an ordinary medical practitioner. He did not realize that he had entertained an angel unawares. But I, who knew of your great reputation, advised him to put his affairs in your hands—without prejudice to the official investigations," Mr. Khambata added hastily, bowing to the superintendent.

"And I," said Mr. Byramji, "instantly decided to act on my kinsman's advice. I have come to beg you to leave no stone unturned to secure the punishment of my cousin's murderer. Spare no expense. I am a rich man and my poor cousin's property will come to me. As to the ruby, recover it if you can, but it is of no consequence. Vengeance—justice is what I seek. Deliver this wretch into my hands, or into the hands of justice, and I give you the ruby or its value, freely—gladly."

"There is no need," said Thorndyke, "of such an extraordinary inducement. If you wish me to investigate this case, I will do so and will use every means at my disposal, without prejudice, as your friend says, to the proper claims of the officers of the law. But you understand that I can make no promises. I cannot guarantee success."

"We understand that," said Mr. Khambata. "But we know that if you undertake the case, everything that is possible will be

done. And now we must leave you to your consultation."

As soon as our clients had gone, Miller rose from his chair with his hand in his breast pocket. "I dare say, Doctor," said he, "you can guess what I have come about. I was sent for to look into this Byramji case, and I heard from Mr. Byramji that you had been there and that you had made a minute examination of the missing man's hat. So have I; and I don't mind telling you that I could learn nothing from it."

"I haven't learnt much myself," said Thorndyke.

"But you've picked up something," urged Miller, "if it is only a hint; and we have just a little clue. There is very small doubt that this is the same man—'The New Jersey Sphinx,' as the papers call him—that committed those other robberies; and a very difficult type of criminal he is to get hold of. He is bold, he is wary, he plays a lone hand, and he sticks at nothing. He has no confederates, and he kills every time. The American police never got near him but once; and that once gives us the only clues we have."

"Fingerprints?" asked Thorndyke.

"Yes, and very poor ones, too. So rough that you can hardly make out the pattern. And even those are not absolutely guaranteed to be his; but in any case, fingerprints are not much use until you've got the man. And there is a photograph of the fellow himself. But it is only a snapshot, and a poor one at that. All it shows is that he has a mop of hair and a pointed beard—or at least he had when the photograph was taken. But for identification purposes it is practically worthless. Still, there it is; and what I propose is this: we want this man and so do you; we've worked together before and can trust one another. I am going to lay my cards on the table and ask you to do the same."

"But, my dear Miller," said Thorndyke, "I haven't any cards. I haven't a single solid fact."

The detective was visibly disappointed. Nevertheless, he laid two photographs on the table and pushed them towards Thorndyke, who inspected them through his lens and passed them to me.

"The pattern is very indistinct and broken up," he remarked.

"Yes," said Miller; "the prints must have been made on a very rough surface, though you get prints something like those from fitters or other men who use files and handle rough metal. And now, Doctor, can't you give us a lead of any kind?"

Thorndyke reflected a few moments. "I really have not a single real fact," said he, "and I am unwilling to make merely speculative suggestions."

"Oh, that's all right," Miller replied cheerfully. "Give us a

start. I shan't complain if it comes to nothing."

"Well," Thorndyke said reluctantly, "I was thinking of getting a few particulars as to the various tenants of No. 51, Clifford's Inn. Perhaps you could do it more easily and it might be worth your while."

"Good!" Miller exclaimed gleefully. "He 'gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name.' "

"It is probably the wrong name," Thorndyke reminded him.

"I don't care," said Miller. "But why shouldn't we go together? It's too late tonight, and I can't manage tomorrow morning. But say tomorrow afternoon. Two heads are better than one, you know, especially when the second one is yours. Or perhaps," he added, with a glance at me, "three would be better still."

Thorndyke considered for a moment or two and then looked at me.

"What do you say, Jervis?" he asked.

As my afternoon was unoccupied, I agreed with enthusiasm, being as curious as the superintendent to know how Thorndyke had connected this particular locality with the vanished criminal; and Miller departed in high spirits with an appointment for the morrow at three o'clock in the afternoon.

For some time after the superintendent's departure I sat wrapped in profound meditation. In some mysterious way the address, 51, Clifford's Inn, had emerged from the formless data yielded by the derelict hat. But what had been the connection? Apparently the fragment of the addressed envelope had furnished the clue. But how had Thorndyke extended "—n" into "51, Clifford's Inn"? It was to me a complete mystery.

Meanwhile, Thorndyke had seated himself at the writing table, and I noticed that of the two letters which he wrote, one was written on our headed paper and the other on ordinary plain notepaper. I was speculating on the reason for this when he rose, and as he stuck on the stamps, said to me, "I am just going out to post these two letters. Do you care for a short stroll through the leafy shades of Fleet Street? The evening is still young."

"The rural solitudes of Fleet Street attract me at all hours," I replied, fetching my hat from the adjoining office; and we accordingly sallied forth together, strolling up King's Bench Walk and emerging into Fleet Street by way of Mitre Court. When Thorndyke had dropped his letters into the post office box he stood awhile gazing up at the tower of St. Dunstan's Church.

"Have you ever been in Clifford's Inn, Jervis?" he inquired.

"Never," I replied (we passed through it together on an average a dozen times a week), "but it is

not too late for an exploratory visit."

We crossed the road, and entering Clifford's Inn Passage, passed through the still half-open gate, crossed the outer court and threaded the tunnel-like entry by the hall to the inner court, near the middle of which Thorndyke halted, and looking up at one of the ancient houses, remarked, "No. 51."

"So that is where our friend hangs out his flag," said I.

"Oh, come, Jervis," he protested, "I am surprised at you; you are as bad as Miller. I have merely suggested a possible connection between these premises and the hat that was left at Bedford Place. As to the nature of that connection I have no idea, and there may be no connection at all. I assure you, Jervis, that I am on the thinnest possible ice. I am working on a hypothesis which is in the highest degree speculative, and I should not have given Miller a hint, but that he was so eager and so willing to help—and also that I wanted his fingerprints. But we are really only at the beginning, and may never get any farther."

I looked up at the old house. It was all in darkness excepting the top floor, where a couple of lighted windows showed the shadow of a man moving rapidly about the room. We crossed to the entry and inspected the names painted on the door-posts. The ground floor was occupied by a firm of photo-engravers, the first floor by a Mr. Carrington, whose name stood out conspicuously on its oblong of comparatively fresh white paint, while the tenants of the second floor—old residents, to judge by the faded and discolored paint in which their names were announced—were Messrs. Burt & Highley, metallurgists.

"Burt has departed," said Thorndyke, as I read out the names; and he pointed to two red lines of erasure which I had not noticed in the dim light, "so the active gentleman above is presumably Mr. Highley, and we may take it that he has residential as well as business premises. I wonder who and what Mr. Carrington is—but I dare say we shall find out tomorrow."

With this he dismissed the professional aspects of Clifford's Inn, and changing the subject to its history and associations, chatted in his inimitable, picturesque manner until our leisurely perambulations brought us at length to the Inner Temple Gate.

On the following morning we bustled through our work in order to leave the afternoon free, making several joint visits to solicitors from whom we were taking instructions. Returning from the last of these—a City lawyer—Thorndyke turned into St. Helen's Place and halted at a doorway bearing the brass plate of a firm of assayists and refiners. I followed him into the outer office where, on his

mentioning his name, an elderly man came to the counter.

"Mr. Grayson has put out some specimens for you, sir," said he. "They are about thirty grains to the ton—you said that the content was of no importance—and I am to tell you that you need not return them. They are not worth treating." He went to a large safe from which he took a canvas bag, and returning to the counter, turned out on it the contents of the bag, consisting of about a dozen good-sized lumps of quartz and a glittering yellow fragment, which Thorndyke picked out and dropped in his pocket.

"Will that collection do?" our friend inquired.

"It will answer my purpose perfectly," Thorndyke replied, and when the specimens had been replaced in the bag, and the latter deposited in Thorndyke's handbag, my colleague thanked the assistant and we went on our way.

"We extend our activities into the domain of mineralogy," I remarked.

Thorndyke smiled an inscrutable smile. "We also employ the suction pump as an instrument of research," he observed. "However, the strategic uses of chunks of quartz—otherwise than as missiles—will develop themselves in due course, and the interval may be used for reflection."

It was. But my reflections brought no solution. I noticed, however, that when at three o'clock we set forth in company with the superintendent, the bag went with us; and having offered to carry it and having had my offer accepted with a sly twinkle, its weight assured me that the quartz was still inside.

"Chambers and Offices to let," Thorndyke read aloud as we approached the porter's lodge. "That lets us in, I think. And the porter knows Dr. Jervis and me by sight, so he will talk more freely."

"He doesn't know me," said the superintendent, "but I'll keep in the background, all the same."

A pull at the bell brought out a clerical-looking man in a tall hat and a frock coat, who regarded Thorndyke and me through his spectacles with an amiable air of recognition.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Larkin," said Thorndyke. "I am asked to get particulars of vacant chambers. What have you got to let?"

Mr. Larkin reflected. "Let me see. There's a ground floor at No. 5—rather dark—and a small second-pair set at No. 12. And then there is—oh, yes, there is a good first floor set at No. 51. They wouldn't have been vacant until Michaelmas, but Mr. Carrington, the tenant, has had to go abroad suddenly. I had a letter from him this morning, enclosing the key. Funny letter, too." He dived into his pocket, and hauling out a bundle of letters, selected one and handed it to Thorndyke with a broad smile.

Thorndyke glanced at the postmark ("London, E."), and having taken out the key, extracted the letter, which he opened and held so that Miller and I could see it. The paper bore the printed heading, "Baltic Shipping Company, Wapping," and the further written heading, *"S.S. Gothenburg,"* and the letter was brief and to the point:

Dear Sir,

I am giving up my chambers at No. 51, as I have been suddenly called abroad. I enclose the key, but am not troubling you with the rent. The sale of my costly furniture will more than cover it, and the surplus can be expended on painting the garden railings.

Yours sincerely,
A. Carrington.

Thorndyke smilingly replaced the letter and the key in the envelope and asked:

"What is the furniture like?"

"You'll see," chuckled the porter, "if you care to look at the rooms. And I think they might suit. They're a good set."

"Quiet?"

"Yes, pretty quiet. There's a metallurgist overhead—Highley—used to be Burt & Highley, but Burt has gone to the city, and I don't think Highley does much business now."

"Let me see," said Thorndyke, "I think I used to meet Highley sometimes—a tall, dark man, isn't he?"

"No, that would be Burt. Highley is a little, fairish man, rather bald, with a pretty rich complexion"—here Mr. Larkin tapped his nose knowingly and raised his little finger—"which may account for the falling off of business."

"Hadn't we better have a look at the rooms?" Miller interrupted a little impatiently.

"Can we see them, Mr. Larkin?" asked Thorndyke.

"Certainly," was the reply. "You've got the key. Let me have it when you've seen the rooms; and whatever you do," he added with a broad grin, "be careful of the furniture."

"It looks," the superintendent remarked as we crossed the inner court, "as if Mr. Carrington had done a mizzle. That's hopeful. And I see," he continued, glancing at the fresh paint on the doorpost as we passed through the entry, "that he hasn't been here long. That's hopeful, too."

We ascended to the first floor, and as Thorndyke unlocked and threw open the door, Miller laughed aloud. The "costly furniture" consisted of a small kitchen table, a Windsor chair and a dilapidated deck-chair. The kitchen contained a gas ring, a small saucepan and a frying pan, and the bedroom was furnished with a camp-bed devoid of bed-clothes, a washhand basin on a packing case, and a water can.

"Hallo!" exclaimed the superintendent. "He's left a hat behind.

Quite a good hat, too." He took it down from the peg, glanced at its exterior and then, turning it over, looked inside. And then his mouth opened with a jerk.

"Great Solomon Eagle!" he gasped. "Do you see, Doctor? It's *the* hat."

He held it out to us, and sure enough on the white silk lining of the crown were the embossed, gilt letters, D.B., just as Mr. Byramji had described them.

"Yes," Thorndyke agreed, as the superintendent snatched up a greengrocer's paper bag from the kitchen floor and persuaded the hat into it, "it is undoubtedly the missing link. But what are you going to do now?"

"Do!" said Miller. "Why, I am going to collar the man. These Baltic boats put in at Hull and Newcastle—perhaps he didn't know that—and they are pretty slow boats, too. I shall wire to Newcastle to have the ship detained and take Inspector Badger down to make the arrest. I'll leave you to explain to the porter, and I owe you a thousand thanks for your valuable tip."

With this he bustled away, clasping the precious hat, and from the window we saw him hurry across the court and dart out through the postern into Fetter Lane.

"I think Miller was rather precipitate," said Thorndyke. "He should have got a description of the man and some further particulars."

"Yes," said I. "Miller had much better have waited until you had finished with Mr. Larkin. But you can get some more particulars when we take back the key."

"We shall get more information from the gentleman who lives on the floor above, and I think we will go up and interview him now. I wrote to him last night and made a metallurgical appointment, signing myself W. Polton. Your name, if he should ask, is Stevenson."

As we ascended the stairs to the next floor, I meditated on the rather tortuous proceedings of my usually straightforward colleague. The use of the lumps of quartz was now obvious; but why these mysterious tactics? And why, before knocking at the door, did Thorndyke carefully take the reading of the gas meter on the landing?

The door was opened in response to our knock by a shortish, alert-looking, clean-shaved man in a white overall, who looked at us keenly and rather forbiddingly. But Thorndyke was geniality personified.

"How do you do, Mr. Highley?" said he, holding out his hand, which the metallurgist shook coolly. "You got my letter, I suppose?"

"Yes. But I am not Mr. Highley. He's away and I am carrying on. I think of taking over his busi-

ness, if there is any to take over. My name is Sherwood. Have you got the samples?"

Thorndyke produced the canvas bag, which Mr. Sherwood took from him and emptied out on a bench, picking up the lumps of quartz one by one and examining them closely. Meanwhile Thorndyke took a rapid survey of the premises. Against the wall were two cupel furnaces and a third larger furnace like a small pottery kiln. On a set of narrow shelves were several rows of bone-ash cupels, looking like little white flower-pots, and near them was the cupel-press—an appliance into which powdered bone-ash was fed and compressed by a plunger to form the cupels—while by the side of the press was a tub of bone-ash—a good deal coarser, I noticed, than the usual fine powder. This coarseness was also observed by Thorndyke, who edged up to the tub and dipped his hand into the ash and then wiped his fingers on his handkerchief.

"This stuff doesn't seem to contain much gold," said Mr. Sherwood. "But we shall see when we make the assay."

"What do you think of this?" asked Thorndyke, taking from his pocket the small lump of glittering, golden-looking mineral that he had picked out at the assayist's. Mr. Sherwood took it from him and examined it closely. "This looks more hopeful," said he; "rather rich, in fact."

Thorndyke received this statement with an unmoved countenance; but as for me, I stared at Mr. Sherwood in amazement. For this lump of glittering mineral was simply a fragment of common iron pyrites! It would not have deceived a schoolboy, much less a metallurgist.

Still holding the specimen, and taking a watchmaker's lens from a shelf, Mr. Sherwood moved over to the window. Simultaneously, Thorndyke stepped softly to the cupel shelves and quickly ran his eye along the rows of cupels. Presently he paused at one, examined it more closely, and then, taking it from the shelf, began to pick at it with his finger-nail.

At this moment Mr. Sherwood turned and observed him; and instantly there flashed into the metallurgist's face an expression of mingled anger and alarm.

"Put that down!" he commanded peremptorily, and then, as Thorndyke continued to scrape with his finger-nail, he shouted furiously, "Do you hear? Drop it!"

Thorndyke took him literally at his word and let the cupel fall on the floor, when it shattered into innumerable fragments, of which one of the largest separated itself from the rest. Thorndyke pounced upon it and in an instantaneous glance as he picked it up, I recognized it as a calcined tooth.

Then followed a few moments of weird, dramatic silence. Thorn-

dyke, holding the tooth between his finger and thumb, looked steadily into the eyes of the metallurgist; and the latter, pallid as a corpse, glared at Thorndyke and furtively unbuttoned his overall.

Suddenly the silence broke into a tumult as bewildering as the crash of a railway collision. Sherwood's right hand darted under his overall. Instantly, Thorndyke snatched up another cupel and hurled it with such truth of aim that it shattered on the metallurgist's forehead. And as he flung the missile, he sprang forward, and delivered a swift upper-cut. There was a thunderous crash, a cloud of white dust, and an automatic pistol clattered along the floor.

I snatched up the pistol and rushed to my friend's assistance. But there was no need. With his great strength and his uncanny skill—to say nothing of the effects of the knockout blow—Thorndyke had the man pinned down immovably.

"See if you can find some cord, Jervis," he said in a calm, quiet tone that seemed almost ridiculously out of character with the circumstances.

There was no difficulty about this, for several corded boxes stood in a corner of the laboratory. I cut off two lengths, with one of which I secured the prostrate man's arms and with the other fastened his knees and ankles.

"Now," said Thorndyke, "if you will take charge of his hands, we will make a preliminary inspection. Let us first see if he wears a belt."

Unbuttoning the man's waistcoat, he drew up the shirt, disclosing a broad, webbing belt furnished with several leather pockets, the buttoned flaps of which he felt carefully, regardless of the stream of threats and imprecations that poured from our victim's swollen lips. From the front pockets he proceeded to the back, passing an exploratory hand under the writhing body.

"Ah!" he exclaimed suddenly, "just turn him over, and look out for his heels."

We rolled our captive over, and as Thorndyke "skinned the rabbit," a central pocket came into view, into which, when he had unbuttoned it, he inserted his fingers. "Yes," he continued, "I think this is what we are looking for." He withdrew his fingers, between which he held a small packet of Japanese paper, and with feverish excitement I watched him open out layer after layer of the soft wrapping. As he turned back the last fold a wonderful crimson sparkle told me that the "great ruby" was found.

"There, Jervis," said Thorndyke, holding the magnificent gem towards me in the palm of his hand, "look on this beautiful, sinister thing, charged with untold potentialities of evil—and thank the gods that it is not yours."

He wrapped it up again carefully and, having bestowed it in an inner pocket, said, "And now give me the pistol and run down to the telegraph office and see if you can stop Miller. I should like him to have the credit for this."

I handed him the pistol and made my way out into Fetter Lane and so down to Fleet Street, where at the post office my urgent message was sent off to Scotland Yard immediately. In a few minutes the reply came that Superintendent Miller had not yet left and that he was starting immediately for Clifford's Inn. A quarter of an hour later he drove up in a hansom to the Fetter Lane gate and I conducted him up to the second floor, where Thorndyke introduced him to his prisoner and witnessed the official arrest.

"You don't see how I arrived at it," said Thorndyke as we walked homeward after returning the key. "Well, I am not surprised. The initial evidence was of the weakest; it acquired significance only by cumulative effect. Let us reconstruct it as it developed.

"The derelict hat was, of course, the starting point. Now the first thing one noticed was that it appeared to have had more than one owner. No man would buy a new hat that fitted so badly as to need all that packing; and the arrangement of the packing suggested a long-headed man wearing a hat that had belonged to a man with a short head. Then there were the suggestions offered by the slips of paper. The fragmentary address referred to a place the name of which ended in 'n' and the remainder was evidently 'London, W.C.' Now what West Central place names end in 'n.' It was not a street, a square or a court, and Barbican is not in the W.C. district. It was almost certainly one of the half-dozen surviving Inns of Court or Chancery. But, of course, it was not necessarily the address of the owner of the hat.

"The other slip of paper bore the end of a word ending in 'el,' and another word ending in 'eep,' and connected with these were quantities stated in ounces and pennyweights troy weight. But the only persons who use troy weight are those who deal in precious metals. I inferred therefore that the 'el' was part of 'lemel,' and that the 'eep' was part of 'floor-sweep,' an inference that was supported by the respective quantities, three ounces five pennyweights of lemel and nine and a half ounces of floor-sweep."

"What is lemel?" I asked.

"It is the trade name for the gold or silver filings that collect in the 'skin' of a jeweller's bench. Floor-sweep is, of course, the dust swept up on the floor of a jeweller's or goldsmith's workshop. The lemel is actual metal, though not of uniform fineness, but the 'sweep' is a mixture of dirt and

metal. Both are saved and sent to the refiners to have the gold and silver extracted.

"This paper, then, was connected either with a goldsmith or a gold refiner—who might call himself an assayist or a metallurgist. The connection was supported by the leaf of a price list of gas stoves. A metallurgist would be kept well supplied with lists of gas stoves and furnaces. The traces of lead in the dust from the hat gave us another straw blowing in the same direction, for gold assayed by the dry process is fused in the cupel furnace with lead; and as the lead oxidizes and the oxide is volatile, traces of lead would tend to appear in the dust deposited in the laboratory.

"The next thing to do was to consult the directory; and when I did so, I found that there were no goldsmiths in any of the Inns and only one assayist—Mr. Highley, of Clifford's Inn. The probabilities, therefore, slender as they were, pointed to some connection between this stray hat and Mr. Highley. And this was positively all the information that we had when we came out this afternoon.

"As soon as we got to Clifford's Inn, however, the evidence began to grow like a rolling snowball. First there was Larkin's contribution; and then there was the discovery of the missing hat. Now, as soon as I saw that hat my suspicions fell upon the man upstairs. I felt a conviction that the hat had been left there purposely and that the letter to Larkin was just a red herring to create a false trail. Nevertheless, the presence of that hat completely confirmed the other evidence. It showed that the apparent connection was a real connection."

"But," I asked, "what made you suspect the man upstairs?"

"My dear Jervis!" he exclaimed. "Consider the facts. That hat was enough to hang the man who left it there. Can you imagine this astute, wary villain making such an idiot's mistake—going away and leaving the means of his conviction for anyone to find? But you are forgetting that whereas the missing hat was found on the first floor, the murderer's hat was connected with the second floor. The evidence suggested that it was Highley's hat. And now, before we go on to the next stage, let me remind you of those fingerprints. Miller thought that their rough appearance was due to the surface on which they had been made. But it was not. They were the prints of a person who was suffering from ichthyosis, palmar psoriasis or some dry dermatitis.

"There is one other point. The man we were looking for was a murderer. His life was already forfeit. To such a man another murder more or less is of no consequence. If this man, having laid the false trail, had determined to take sanctuary in Highley's rooms, it was probable that he had al-

ready got rid of Highley. And remember that a metallurgist has unrivalled means of disposing of a body; for not only is each of his muffle furnaces a miniature crematorium, but the very residue of a cremated body—bone-ash—is one of the materials of his trade.

"When we went upstairs, I first took the reading of the gas meter and ascertained that a large amount of gas had been used recently. Then, when we entered I took the opportunity to shake hands with Mr. Sherwood, and immediately I became aware that he suffered from a rather extreme form of ichthyosis. That was the first point of verification. Then we discovered that he actually could not distinguish between iron pyrites and auriferous quartz. He was not a metallurgist at all. He was a masquerader. Then the bone-ash in the tub was mixed with fragments of calcined bone, and the cupels all showed similar fragments. In one of them I could see part of the crown of a tooth. That was pure luck. But observe that by that time I had enough evidence to justify an arrest. The tooth served only to bring the affair to a crisis; and his response to my unspoken accusation saved us the trouble of further search for confirmatory evidence."

"What is not quite clear to me," said I, "is when and why he made away with Highley. As the body has been completely reduced to bone-ash, Highley must have been dead at least some days."

"Yes, very likely," Thorndyke agreed. "I take it that the course of events was somewhat like this: The police have been searching eagerly for this man, and every new crime must have made his position more unsafe—for a criminal can never be sure that he has not dropped some clue. It began to be necessary for him to make some arrangements for leaving the country and meanwhile to have a retreat in case his whereabouts should chance to be discovered. Highley's chambers were admirable for both purposes. Here was a solitary man who seldom had a visitor, and who would probably not be missed for some considerable time; and in those chambers were the means of rapidly and completely disposing of the body. The mere murder would be a negligible detail to this ruffian.

"I imagine that Highley was done to death at least a week ago, and that the murderer did not take up his new tenancy until the body was reduced to ash. With that large furnace in addition to the small ones, this would not take long. When the new premises were ready, he could make a sham disappearance to cover his actual flight later; and you must see how perfectly misleading that sham disappearance was. If the police had discovered that hat in the empty room only a week later, they would have been certain that he

had escaped to one of the Baltic ports; and while they were following his supposed tracks, he could have gone off comfortably via Folkestone or Southampton."

"Then you think he had only just moved into Highley's rooms?"

"I should say he moved in last night. The murder of Byramji was probably planned on some information that the murderer had picked up, and as soon as it was accomplished he began forthwith to lay down the false tracks. When he reached his rooms yesterday afternoon, he must have written the letter to Larkin and gone off at once to the East End to post it. Then he probably had his bushy hair cut short and shaved off his beard and moustache—which would render him quite unrecognizable by Larkin—and moved into Highley's chambers, from which he would have quietly sallied forth in a few days' time to take his passage to the Continent. It was quite a good plan and but for the accident of taking the wrong hat, would almost certainly have succeeded."

Once every year, on the second of August, there is delivered with unfailing regularity at No. 5A, King's Bench Walk, a large box of carved sandal-wood filled with the choicest Trichinopoly cheroots and accompanied by an affectionate letter from our late client, Mr. Byramji. For the second of August is the anniversary of the death (in the execution shed at Newgate) of Cornelius Barnett, otherwise known as the "New Jersey Sphinx."

NEEDED—MORE RESEARCH

The fact that steel pens were not introduced until 1780 once played an important role in a case. A man was being tried, charged with having forged two documents vital in an old woman's claim to certain estates. The signatures were the only writing on the documents that showed the characteristic marks of a steel pen, and—since the man who was supposed to have signed the papers, William Penn, happened to have died in 1720—it was obvious that the signatures were forgeries. Additional proof was that neither signature was written in the iron-gall ink in use when the documents had allegedly been signed.

army of the shadows

by . . . Eric Ambler

Sheer necessity prompted the question—must this man die? The lives of so many people would depend on their decision.

It is three years since Llewellyn removed my appendix; but we still meet occasionally. I am dimly related to his wife: that, at least, is the pretext for the acquaintanceship. The truth is that, during my convalescence, we happened to discover that we both like the same musicians. Before the war we usually met when there was some Sibelius being played and went to hear it together. I was a little puzzled when, about three weeks ago, he telephoned with the suggestion that I should dine at his house that night. There was not, I knew, a concert of any sort in London. I agreed, however, to grope my way round to Upper Wimpole Street shortly before eight o'clock.

It was not until he had presented me with a brandy that I found out why I had been invited to dinner.

"Do you remember," he said suddenly, "that I spent a week or so in Belgrade last year? I missed Beecham doing the Second through it. There was one of those international medical bun fights being held there, and I went to

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At first this will appear to be a singularly dated story, and then you will realize that the Army of the Shadows still fights on in these days—on the side of the Free Democracies—against a common enemy. Eric Ambler, author of A COFFIN FOR DIMITRIOS, JUDGEMENT ON DELTCHEV *and* THE SCHIRMER INHERITANCE, *was nominated for the Academy Award for his screenplay of* THE CRUEL SEA.

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represent the Association. My German is fairly good, you know. I motored. Can't stick trains. Anyway, on the way back a very funny thing happened to me. Did I ever tell you about it?"

"I don't think so."

"I thought not. Well"—he laughed self-consciously—"it was so funny now there's a war on that I've been amusing myself by writing the whole thing down. I wondered whether you'd be good enough to cast a professional eye over it for me. I've tried"—he laughed again—"to make a really literary job of it. Like a story, you know."

His hand had been out of sight behind the arm of his chair, but now it emerged from hiding holding a wad of typewritten sheets.

"It's typed," he said, planking it down on my knees. And then, with a theatrical glance at his watch, "Good Lord, it's ten. There's a telephone call I must make. Excuse me for a minute or two, will you?"

He was out of the room before I could open my mouth to reply. I was left alone with the manuscript.

I picked it up. It was entitled "A Strange Encounter." With a sigh, I turned over the title page and began, rather irritably, to read:

The Stelvio Pass is snowed up in winter, and towards the end of November most sensible men driving to Paris from Belgrade or beyond take the long way round via Milan rather than risk being stopped by an early fall of snow. But I was in a hurry and took a chance. By the time I reached Bolzano I was sorry I had done so. It was bitterly cold. and the sky ahead was leaden. At Merano I seriously considered turning back. Instead, I pushed on as hard as I could go. If I had had any sense I should have stopped for petrol before I started the really serious part of the climb. I had six gallons by the gauge then. I knew that it wasn't accurate, but I had filled up early that morning and calculated that I had enough to get me to Sargans. In my anxiety to beat the snow I overlooked the fact that I had miles of low-gear driving to do. On the Swiss side and on the Sargans road where it runs within a mile or two of the Rhätikon part of the German frontier, the car spluttered to a standstill.

For a minute or two I sat there swearing at and to myself and wondering what on earth I was going to do. I was, I knew, the only thing on the road that night for miles.

It was about eight o'clock, very dark and very cold. Except for the faint creaking of the cooling engine and the rustle of the breeze in some nearby trees, there wasn't a sound to be heard. Ahead, the road in the headlights curved away to the right. I got out the map

and tried to find out where I was.

I had passed through one village since I left Klosters, and I knew that it was about ten kilometers back. I must, therefore, either walk back ten kilometers to that village, or forward to the next village, whichever was the nearer. I looked at the map. It was of that useless kind that they sell to motorists. There was nothing marked between Klosters and Sargans. For all I knew, the next village might be fifteen or twenty kilometers away.

An Alpine road on a late November night is not the place to choose if you want to sleep in your car. I decided to walk back the way I had come.

I had a box of those small Italian waxed matches with me when I started out. There were, I thought, about a hundred in the box, and I calculated that, if I struck one every hundred meters, they would last until I reached the village.

That was when I was near the lights of the car. When I got out of sight of them, things were different. The darkness seemed to press against the backs of my eyes. It was almost painful. I couldn't even see the shape of the road along which I was walking. It was only by the rustling and the smell of resin that I knew that I was walking between fir trees. By the time I had covered a mile I had six matches left. Then it began to snow.

I say "snow." It had been snow; but the Sargans road was still below the snow-line, and the stuff came down as a sort of half-frozen mush that slid down my face into the gap between my coat collar and my neck.

I must have done about another mile and a half when the real trouble began. I still had the six matches, but my hands were too numb to get them out of the box without wetting them, and I had been going forward blindly, sometimes on the road and sometimes off it. I was wondering whether I would get along better if I sang, when I walked into a telegraph post.

It was of pre-cast concrete and the edge was as sharp as a razor. My face was as numb as my hands and I didn't feel much except a sickening jar; but I could taste blood trickling between my teeth and found that my nose was bleeding. It was as I held my head back to stop it that I saw the light, looking for all the world as if it were suspended in mid-air above me.

It wasn't suspended in mid-air, and it wasn't above me. Darkness does strange things to perspective. After a few seconds I saw that it was showing through the trees on the hillside, up off the right of the road.

Anyone who has been in the sort of mess that I was in will know exactly how my mind worked at that moment. I did not

speculate as to the origin of that God-forsaken light or as to whether or not the owner of it would be pleased to see me. I was cold and wet, my nose was bleeding, and I would not have cared if someone had told me that behind the light was a maniac with a machine-gun. I knew only that the light meant that there was some sort of human habitation near me and that I was going to spend the night in it.

I moved over to the other side of the road and began to feel my way along the wire fence I found there. Twenty yards or so farther on, my hands touched a wooden gate. The light was no longer visible, but I pushed the gate open and walked on into the blackness.

The ground rose steeply under my feet. It was a path of sorts, and soon I stumbled over the beginnings of a flight of log steps. There must have been well over a hundred of them. Then there was another stretch of path, not quite so steep. When I again saw the light, I was only about twenty yards from it.

It came from an oil reading-lamp standing near a window. From the shape of the window and the reflected light of the lamp, I could see that the place was a small chalet of the kind usually let to families for the summer season or for the winter sports. That it should be occupied at the end of November was curious. But I didn't ponder over the curiosity: I had seen something else through the window besides the lamp. The light from a fire was flickering in the room.

I went forward up the path to the door. There was no knocker. I hammered on the wet, varnished wood with my fist and waited. There was no sound from inside. After a moment or two I knocked again. Still there was no sign of life within. I knocked and waited for several minutes. Then I began to shiver. In desperation I grabbed the latch of the door and rattled it violently. The next moment I felt it give and the door creaked open a few inches.

I think that I have a normal, healthy respect for the property and privacy of my fellow-creatures; but at that moment I was feeling neither normal nor healthy. Obviously, the owner of the chalet could not be far away. I stood there for a moment or two, hesitating. I could smell the wood smoke from the fire, and mingled with it a bitter, oily smell which seemed faintly familiar. But all I cared about was the fire. I hesitated no longer and walked in.

As soon as I was inside I saw that there was something more than curious about the place, and that I should have waited.

The room itself was ordinary enough. It was rather larger than I had expected, but there were the usual pinewood walls, the usual pinewood floor, the usual pinewood staircase up to the bedrooms,

and the usual tiled fireplace. There were the usual tables and chairs, too: turned and painted nonsense of the kind that sometimes finds its way into English tea-shops. There were red gingham curtains over the windows. You felt that the owner probably had lots of other places just like it, and that he made a good thing out of letting them.

No, it was what had been added to the room that was curious. All the furniture had been crowded into one half of the space. In the other half, standing on linoleum and looking as if it were used a good deal, was a printing press.

The machine was a small treadle platten of the kind used by jobbing printers for running off tradesmen's circulars. It looked very old and decrepit. Alongside it on a trestle-table were a case of type and a small proofing press with a locked-up form in it. On a second table stood a pile of interleaved sheets, beside which was a stack of what appeared to be some of the same sheets folded. The folding was obviously being done by hand. I picked up one of the folded sheets.

It looked like one of those long, narrow business-promotion folders issued by travel agencies. The front page was devoted to the reproduction, in watery blue ink, of a lino-cut of a clump of pines on the shore of a lake, and the display of the word "TITISEE." Page two and the page folded in to face it carried a rhapsodical account in German of the beauties of Baden in general and Lake Titisee in particular.

I put the folder down. An inaccessible Swiss chalet was an odd place to choose for printing German travel advertisements; but I was not disposed to dwell on its oddity. I was cold.

I was moving towards the fire when my eye was caught by five words printed in bold capitals on one of the unfolded sheets on the table: "DEUTSCHE MANNER UND FRAUEN, KAMERADEN!"

I stood still. I remember that my heart thudded against my ribs as suddenly and violently as it had earlier that day on the Stelvio when some crazy fool in a Hispano had nearly crowded me off the road.

I leaned forward, picked the folder up again, and opened it right out. The message began on the second of the three inside pages.

"GERMAN MEN AND WOMEN, COMRADES! We speak to you with the voice of German Democracy, bringing you news. Neither Nazi propaganda nor the Gestapo can silence us, for we have an ally which is proof against floggings, an ally which no man in the history of the world has been able to defeat. That ally is Truth. Hear it, remember it, and repeat it. The sooner the Truth is known, the sooner will Germany again

hold up its head among the free nations of the world."

Then followed a sort of news bulletin consisting of facts and figures (especially figures) about the economic condition of Germany. There was also news of a strike in the Krupp works at Essen and a short description of a riot outside a shipyard in Hamburg.

I put it down again. Now I knew why these "travel advertisements" were being printed in an inaccessible Swiss chalet instead of in Germany itself. No German railway official would distribute these folders. That business would be left to more desperate men. These folders would not collect dust on the counters of travel agencies. They would be found in trains and in trams, in buses and in parked cars, in waiting-rooms and in bars, under restaurant plates and inside table napkins. Some of the men that put them there would be caught and tortured to betray their fellows; but the distribution would go on. The folders would be read, perhaps furtively discussed. A little more truth would seep through Goebbels' dam of lies to rot still further the creaking foundation of Nazidom.

Then, as I stood there with the smell of wood smoke and printing ink in my nostrils as I stood staring at that decrepit little machine as if it were the very voice of freedom, I heard footsteps outside.

I suppose that I should have stood my ground. I had, after all, a perfectly good explanation of my presence there. My car and the blood from my nose would confirm my story. But I didn't reason that way. I had stumbled on a secret, and my first impulse was to try to hide the fact from the owner of the secret. I obeyed that impulse.

I looked round quickly and saw the stairs. Before I had even begun to wonder if I might not be doing something excessively stupid, I was up the stairs and opening the first door I came to on the landing. In the half-light I caught a glimpse of a bed; then I was inside the room with the door slightly ajar. I could see across the landing and through the wooden palings along it to the top of the window at the far side of the room below.

I knew that someone had come in: I could hear him moving about. He lit another lamp. There was a sound from the door and a second person entered.

A woman's voice said in German, "Thank God, Johann has left a good fire."

There was an answering grunt. It came from the man. I could almost feel them warming their hands.

"Get the coffee, Freda," said the man suddenly. "I must go back soon."

"But Bruno is there. You should take a little rest first."

"Bruno is a Berliner. He is not

as used to the cold as I am. If Kurt should come now he would be tired. Bruno could only look after himself."

There was silence for a moment. Then the woman spoke again.

"Do you really think that he will come now, Stephan? It is so late." She paused. Her voice had sounded casual, elaborately casual; but now, as she went on, there was an edge to it that touched the nerves. "I can keep quite calm about it, you see, Stephan. I wish to believe, but it is so late, isn't it? You don't think he will come now, do you? Admit it."

He laughed, but too heartily. "You are too nervous, Freda. Kurt can take care of himself. He knows all the tricks now. He may have been waiting for the first snow. The frontier guards would not be so alert on a night like this."

"He should have been back a week ago. You know that as well as I do, Stephan. He has never been delayed so long before. They have got him. That is all. You see, I can be calm about it even though he is my dear husband." And then her voice broke. "I knew it would happen sooner or later. I knew it. First Hans, then Karl, and now Kurt. Those swine, those—"

She sobbed and broke suddenly into passionate weeping. He tried helplessly to comfort her.

I had heard enough. I was shaking from head to foot; but whether it was the cold or not, I don't know. I stood back from the door. Then, as I did so, I heard a sound from behind me.

I had noticed the bed as I had slipped into the room, but the idea that there might be someone in it had not entered my head. Now, as I whipped round, I saw that I had made a serious mistake.

Sitting on the edge of the bed in which he had been lying was a very thin, middle-aged man in a nightshirt. By the faint light from the landing I could see his eyes, bleary from sleep, and his grizzled hair standing ludicrously on end. But for the one thing I should have laughed. That one thing was the large automatic pistol which he held pointed at me. His hand was as steady as a rock.

"Don't move," he said. He raised his voice. "Stephan! Come quickly!"

"I must apologize . . ." I began in German.

"You will be allowed to speak later."

I heard Stephan dash up the stairs.

"What is it, Johann?"

"Come here."

The door was pushed open behind me. I heard him draw in his breath sharply.

"Who is it?"

"I do not know. I was awakened by a noise. I was about to get up when this man came into the room. He did not see me. He

has been listening to your conversation. He must have been examining the plant when he heard you returning."

"If you will allow me to explain . . ."

"You may explain downstairs," said the man called Stephan. "Give me the pistol, Johann."

The pistol changed hands and I could see Stephan, a lean, raw-boned fellow with broad, sharp shoulders and dangerous eyes. He wore black oilskins and gum-boots. I saw the muscles in his cheeks tighten.

"Raise your hands and walk downstairs. Slowly. If you run, I shall shoot immediately. March."

I went downstairs.

The woman, Freda, was standing by the door, staring blankly up at me as I descended. She must have been about thirty and had that soft rather matronly look about her that is characteristic of so many young German women. She was short and plump, and as if to accentuate the fact, her straw-colored hair was plaited across her head. Wisps of the hair had become detached and clung wetly to the sides of her neck. She too wore a black oilskin coat and gum-boots.

The gray eyes, red and swollen with crying, looked beyond me.

"Who is it, Stephan?"

"He was hiding upstairs."

We had reached the foot of the stairs. He motioned me away from the door and towards the fire. "Now, we will hear your explanation."

I gave it with profuse apologies. I admitted that I had examined the folders and read one. "It seemed to me," I concluded, "that my presence might be embarrassing to you. I was about to leave when you returned. Then, I am afraid, I lost my head and attempted to hide.

Not one of them was believing a word that I was saying: I could see that from their faces. "I assure you," I went on in exasperation, "that what I am telling . . ."

"What nationality are you?"

"British. I . . ."

"Then speak English. What were you doing on this road?"

"I am on my way home from Belgrade. I crossed the Yugoslav frontier yesterday and the Italian frontier at Stelvio this afternoon. My passport was stamped at both places if you wish to . . ."

"Why were you in Belgrade?"

"I am a surgeon. I have been attending an international medical convention there."

"Let me see your passport, please."

"Certainly. I have . . ." And then with my hand in my inside pocket, I stopped. My heart felt as if it had come right into my throat. In my haste to be away after the Italian Customs had finished with me, I had thrust my passport with the Customs carnet for the car into the pocket beside me on the door of the car.

They were watching me with expressionless faces. Now, as my hand reappeared empty, I saw Stephan raise his pistol.

"Well?"

"I am sorry." Like a fool I had begun to speak in German again. "I find that I have left my passport in my car. It is several kilometers along the road. If . . ."

And then the woman burst out as if she couldn't stand listening to me any longer.

"Don't you see? Don't you see?" she cried. "It is quite clear. They have found out that we are here. Perhaps after all these months Hans or Karl has been tortured by them into speaking. And so they have taken Kurt and sent this man to spy upon us. It is clear. Don't you see?"

She turned suddenly, and I thought she was going to attack me. Then Stephan put his hand on her arm.

"Gently, Freda." He turned to me again, and his expression hardened. "You see, my friend, what is in our minds? We know our danger, you see. The fact that we are in Swiss territory will not protect us if the Gestapo should trace us. The Nazis, we know, have little respect for frontiers. The Gestapo have none. They would murder us here as confidently as they would if we were in the Third Reich. We do not underrate their cunning. The fact that you are not a German is not conclusive. You may be what you say you are: you may not. If you are, so much the better. If not, then, I give you fair warning, you will be shot. You say that your passport is in your car several kilometers along the road. Unfortunately, it is not possible for us to spare time tonight to see if that is true. Nor is it possible for one of us to stand guard over you all night. You have already disturbed the first sleep Johann has had in twenty-four hours. There is only one thing for it, I'm afraid. It is undignified and barbaric; but I see no other way. We shall be forced to tie you up so that you cannot leave."

"But this is absurd," I cried angrily. "Good heavens, man, I realize that I've only myself to blame for being here; but surely you could have the common decency to . . ."

"The question," he said sternly, "is not of decency, but of necessity. We have no time tonight for six-kilometer walks. One of our comrades has been delivering a consignment of these folders to our friends in Germany. We hope and believe that he will return to us across the frontier tonight. He may need our help. Mountaineering in such weather is exhausting. Freda, get me some of the cord we use for tying the packages.

I wanted to say something, but the words would not come. I was too angry. I don't think that I've ever been so angry in my life before.

She brought the cord. It was thick gray stuff. He took it and gave the pistol to Johann. Then he came towards me.

I don't think they liked the business any more than I did. He had gone a bit white and he wouldn't look me in the eyes. I think that I must have been white myself; but it was anger with me. He put the cord under one of my elbows. I snatched it away.

"You had better submit," he said harshly.

"To spare your feelings? Certainly not. You'll have to use force, my friend. But don't worry. You'll get used to it. You'll be a good Nazi yet. You should knock me down. That'll make it much easier."

What color there was left in his face went. A good deal of my anger evaporated at that moment. I felt sorry for the poor devil. I really believe that I should have let him tie me up. But I never knew for certain; for at that moment there was an interruption.

It was the woman who heard it first—the sound of someone running up the path outside. The next moment a man burst wildly into the room.

Stephan had turned. "Bruno! What is it? Why aren't you at the hut?"

The man was striving to get his breath, and for a moment he could hardly speak. His face above the streaming oilskins was blue with cold. Then he gasped out.

"Kurt! He is at the hut! He is wounded—badly!"

The woman gave a little whimpering cry and her hands went to her face. Stephan gripped the newcomer's shoulder.

"What has happened? Quickly!"

"It was dark. The Swiss did not see him. It was one of our patrols. They shot him when he was actually on the Swiss side. He was wounded in the thigh. He crawled on to the hut, but he can go no further. He . . ."

But Stephan had ceased to listen. He turned sharply. "Johann, you must dress yourself at once. Bruno, take the pistol and guard this man. He broke in here. He may be dangerous. Freda, get the cognac and the iodine. We shall need them for Kurt."

He himself went to a cupboard and got out some handkerchiefs, which he began tearing feverishly into strips, which he knotted together. Still gasping for breath, the man Bruno had taken the pistol and was staring at me with a puzzled frown. Then the woman reappeared from the kitchen carrying a bottle of cognac and a small tube of iodine of the sort that is sold for dabbing at cut fingers. Stephan stuffed them in his pockets with the knotted handkerchiefs. Then he called up the stairs. "Hurry, Johann. We are ready to leave."

It was more than I could bear. Professional fussiness, I suppose.

"Has anyone of you," I asked loudly, "ever dealt with a bullet wound before?"

They stared at me. Then Stephan glanced at Bruno.

"If he moves," he said, "shoot." He raised his voice again. "Johann!"

There was an answering cry of reassurance.

"Has it occurred to you," I persisted, "that even if you get him here alive, which I doubt, as you obviously don't know what you're doing, he will need immediate medical attention? Don't you think that one of you had better go for a doctor? Ah, but of course, the doctor would ask questions about a bullet wound, wouldn't he? The matter would be reported to the police."

"We can look after him," he grunted. "Johann! Hurry!"

"It seems a pity," I said reflectively, "that one brave man should have to die because of his friends' stupidity." And then my calm deserted me. "You damn fool," I shouted. "Listen to me. Do you want to kill this man? You're going about it the right way. I'm a surgeon, and this is a surgeon's business. Take that cognac out of your pocket. We shan't need it. The iodine too. And those pieces of rag. Have you got two or three clean towels?"

The woman nodded stupidly.

"Then get them, please, and be quick. And you said something about some coffee. Have you a flask for it? Good. Then we shall take that. Put plenty of sugar in it. I want blankets, too. Three will be enough, but they must be kept dry. We shall need a stretcher. Get two poles or broomsticks and two old coats. We can make a stretcher of sorts by putting the pole through the sleeves of them. Take this cord of yours too. It will be useful to make slings for the stretcher. And hurry! The man may be bleeding to death. Is he far away?"

The man was glowering at me. "Four kilometers. In a climbing hut in the hills this side of the frontier." He stepped forward and gripped my arm. "If you are tricking us . . ." he began.

"I'm not thinking about you," I snapped. I'm thinking about a man who's been crawling along with a bullet in his thigh and a touching faith in his friends. Now get those poles, and hurry."

They hurried. In three minutes they had the things collected. The exhausted Bruno's oilskins and gum-boots had, at my suggestion, been transferred to me. Then I tied one of the blankets round my waist under my coat, and told Stephan and Johann to do the same.

"I," said the woman, "will take the other things."

"You," I said, "will stay here, please."

She straightened up at that. "No," she said firmly, "I will come with you. I shall be quite calm. You will see."

"Nevertheless," I said rather brutally, "you will be more useful here. A bed must be ready by the fire here. There must also be hot bricks and plenty of blankets. I shall need, besides, both boiled and boiling water. You have plenty of ordinary salt, I suppose?"

"Yes, *Herr Doctor*. But . . ."

"We are wasting time."

Two minutes later we left.

I shall never forget that climb. It began about half a mile along the road below the chalet. The first part was mostly up narrow paths between trees. They were covered with pine needles and, in the rain, as slippery as the devil. We had been climbing steadily for about half an hour when Stephan, who had been leading the way with a storm lantern, paused.

"I must put out the light here," he said. "The frontier is only three kilometers from here, and the guards patrol to a depth of two kilometers. They must not see us." He blew out the lamp. "Turn round," he said then. "You will see another light."

I saw it, far away below us, a pin-point.

"That is our light. When we are returning from Germany, we can see it from across the frontier and know that we are are nearly home and that our friends are waiting. Hold on to my coat now. You need not worry about Johann behind you. He knows the path well. This way, *Herr Doktor*."

It was the only sign he gave that he had decided to accept me for what I said I was.

I cannot conceive of how anyone could know that path well. The surface soon changed from pine needles to a sort of rocky rubble, and it twisted and turned like a wounded snake. The wind had dropped, but it was colder than ever, and I found myself crunching through sugary patches of half-frozen slush. I wondered how on earth we were going to bring down a wounded man on an improvised stretcher.

We had been creeping along without the light for about twenty minutes when Stephan stopped and, shielding the lamp with his coat, relit it. I saw that we had arrived.

The climbing hut was built against the side of an overhanging rock face. It was about six feet square inside, and the man was lying diagonally across it on his face. There was a large bloodstain on the floor beneath him. He was semi-conscious. His eyes were closed, but he mumbled something as I felt his pulse.

"Will he live?" whispered Stephan.

I didn't know. The pulse was there, but it was feeble and rapid. His breathing was shallow. I looked at the wound. The bullet had entered on the inner side of the left thigh just below the groin. There was a little bleeding, but it obviously hadn't touched the femoral artery and, as far as I

could see, the bone was all right. I made a dressing with one of the towels and tied it in place with another. The bullet could wait. The immediate danger was from shock aggravated by exposure. I got to work with the blankets and the flask of coffee. Soon the pulse strengthened a little, and after about half an hour I told them how to prepare the stretcher.

I don't know how they got him down that path in the darkness. It was all I could do to get down by myself. It was snowing hard now in great fleecy chunks that blinded you when you moved forward. I was prepared for them to slip and drop the stretcher; but they didn't. It was slow work, however, and it was a good forty minutes before we got to the point where it was safe to light the lamp.

After that I was able to help with the stretcher. At the foot of the path up to the chalet, I went ahead with the lantern. The woman heard my footsteps and came to the door. I realized that we must have been gone for the best part of three hours.

"They're bringing him up," I said. "He'll be all right. I shall need your help now."

She said, "The bed is ready." And then, "Is it serious, *Herr Doktor?*"

"No." I didn't tell her then that there was a bullet to be taken out.

It was a nasty job. The wound itself wasn't so bad. The bullet must have been pretty well spent, for it had lodged up against the bone without doing any real damage. It was the instruments that made it difficult. They came from the kitchen. He didn't stand up to it very well, and I wasn't surprised. I didn't feel so good myself when I'd finished. The cognac came in useful after all.

We finally got him to sleep about five.

"He'll be all right now," I said.

The woman looked at me and I saw the tears begin to trickle down her cheeks. It was only then that I remembered that she wasn't a nurse, but his wife.

It was Johann who comforted her. Stephan came over to me.

"We owe you a great debt, *Herr Doktor,*" he said. "I must apologize for our behavior earlier this evening. We have not always been savages, you know. Kurt was a professor of zoology. Johann was a master printer. I was an architect. Now we are those who crawl across frontiers at night and plot like criminals. We have been treated like savages, and so we live like them. We forget sometimes that we were civilized. We ask your pardon. I do not know how we can repay you for what you have done. We . . ."

But I was too tired for speeches. I smiled quickly at him.

"All that I need by way of a fee is another glass of cognac and a bed to sleep in for a few hours. I suggest, by the way, that you

get a doctor in to look at the patient later today. There will be a little fever to treat. Tell the doctor he fell upon his climbing axe. He won't believe you, but there'll be no bullet for him to be inquisitive about. Oh, and if you could find me a little petrol for my car . . ."

It was five in the afternoon and almost dark again when Stephan woke me. The local doctor, he reported, as he set an enormous tray of food down beside the bed, had come, dressed the wound, prescribed, and gone. My car was filled up with petrol and awaited me below if I wished to drive to Zürich that night. Kurt was awake and could not be prevailed upon to sleep until he had thanked me.

They were all there, grouped about the bed, when I went downstairs. Bruno was the only one who looked as if he had had any sleep.

He sprang to his feet. "Here, Kurt," he said facetiously, "is the *Herr Doktor*. He is going to cut your leg off."

Only the woman did not laugh at the jest. Kurt himself was smiling when I bent over to look at him.

He was a youngish-looking man of about forty with intelligent brown eyes and a high, wide forehead. The smile faded from his face as he looked at me.

"You know what I wish to say, *Herr Doktor?*"

I took refuge in professional brusqueness. "The less you say, the better," I said, and felt for his pulse. But as I did so his fingers moved and gripped my hand.

"One day soon," he said, "England and the Third Reich will be at war. But you will not be at war with Germany. Remember that, please, *Herr Doktor*. Not with Germany. It is people like us who are Germany, and in our way we shall fight with England. You will see."

I left soon after.

At nine that night I was in Zürich.

Llewellyn was back in the room. I put the manuscript down. He looked across at me.

"Very interesting," I said.

"I'd considered sending it up to one of these magazines that publish short stories," he said apologetically. "I thought I'd like your opinion first, though. What do you think?"

I cleared my throat. "Well, of course, it's difficult to say. Very interesting, as I said. But there's no real point to it, is there? It needs something to tie it all together."

"Yes, I see what you mean. It sort of leaves off, doesn't it? But that's how it actually happened." He looked disappointed. "I don't think I could invent an ending. It would be rather a pity, wouldn't it? You see, it's all true."

"Yes, it would be a pity."

"Well, anyway, thanks for reading it. Funny thing to happen. I really only put it down on

paper for fun. Have another brandy?" He got up. "Oh, by the way, I was forgetting. I heard from those people about a week after war broke out. A letter. Let's see now, where did I put it? Ah, yes."

He rummaged in a drawer for a bit, and then, tossing a letter over to me, picked up the brandy bottle.

The envelope bore a Swiss stamp and the postmark was Klosters, September 4th, 1939. The contents felt bulky. I drew them out.

The cause of the bulkiness was what looked like a travel agent's folder doubled up to fit the envelope. I straightened it. On the front page was a lino-cut of a clump of pines on the shore of a lake and the word "TITISEE." I opened out the folder.

"GERMAN MEN AND WOMEN, COMRADES!" The type was worn and battered. "Hitler has led you into war. He fed you with lies about the friendly Polish people. In your name he has now committed a wanton act of aggression against them. As a consequence, the free democracies of England and France have declared war against Germany. Comrades, right and justice are on their side. It is Hitler and National Socialism who are the enemies of peace in Europe. Our place as true Germans is at the side of the democracies *against* Hitler, *against* National Socialism. Hitler cannot win this war. But the people of Germany must act. All Germans, Catholics, Protestants, and Jews, must act now. Our Czech and Slovak friends are already refusing to make guns for Hitler. Let us stand by their sides. Remember . . ."

I was about to read on when I saw that the letter which accompanied the folder had fluttered to the carpet. I picked it up. It consisted of a few typewritten lines on an otherwise blank sheet of paper.

"Greetings, *Herr Doktor.* We secured your address from the Customs carnet in your car and write now to wish you good luck. Kurt, Stephan, and Bruno have made many journeys since we saw you and returned safely each time. Today, Kurt leaves again. We pray for him as always. With this letter we send you Johann's newest work so that you shall see that Kurt spoke the truth to you. We are of the army of the shadows. We do not fight for you against our countrymen; but we fight with you against National Socialism, our common enemy.

"Auf Wiedersehen.
Freda, Kurt, Stephan,
Johann, and Bruno."

Llewellyn put my glass down on the table beside me. "Help yourself to a cigarette. What do you think of that? Nice of them, wasn't it?" he added. "Sentimental lot, these Germans."

vase of tu san

by . . . Dan Ross

THE sallow, hard-faced man in the dirty linen suit cautiously opened the office door and let himself in. Mei Wong, the elderly proprietor of the Bombay Art and Curio Company, was bent over his desk on which sat a small brown vase, a dish of purplish liquid and brushes. He was so completely absorbed in his task of mixing the liquid that he did not notice the intruder.

The man's face twisted in an unpleasant sneer as he watched the stout old Chinaman, so pleasantly at ease here in his studio filled with oriental art treasures. Within the next few minutes Mei Wong would bid farewell to all this—because he was going to murder him.

He broke the silence: "You have a visitor, Mei Wong."

Mei Wong's fat bland face looked up. The old man dropped his paint brush and slight surprise flicked across his features as recognition came: "Blake," he said tonelessly, "You're back."

The old man, face impassive, lifted the brush and began to slowly outline the ages old and delicate characters.

"Yes. I'm back," the sallow man's voice was filled with menace, "as I said I would be." He reached in his pocket and drew out

Mei Wong, elderly antiques dealer with a peculiar affinity for violent thoughts, and increasingly well known to British and Canadian readers, makes a first appearance in these pages. Material by the author, who lives in New Brunswick, Canada, has been featured on the Canadian radio network.

a gun and pointed it at Mei Wong, "You had your moment in court when you testified against me. Now I'm here to settle things the only way it matters."

"It was a great pity," Mei Wong nodded in agreement, "my having to play a part in your imprisonment. I merely told the truth. You and I have no quarrel. I was sorry for your trouble."

"Not sorry enough to stop me getting five years." The thin lips curled again.

The old Chinaman shook his head resignedly. "It seemed quite clear at the time. You were guilty. As things stand now wouldn't you be wise to forget the whole sorry affair."

"Not likely," the sallow man snapped, "I'm here to finish you and maybe help myself to a few of your trinkets."

"You would find them hard to dispose of," Mei Wong shrugged. "My art pieces are well known. Now, if you will excuse me I must finish decorating this dragon vase. A messenger is on the way for it. If it should not be ready it might arouse suspicion. You wouldn't want that, I'm sure."

The intruder's hard gray eyes studied the vase. "What is this masterpiece?"

Mei Wong lifted a brush and deftly dipped it into the liquid and then began to paint delicate purple Chinese letters on the light brown surface. "It is a piece sent me by a fellow countryman, Tu San. He owns a shop catering to the tourist trade and sends me many of these vases for decoration. Actually they are quite perfect in themselves but the tourists prefer some symbols. The ink I use is of my own invention, unique because of its quick-drying and long-lasting quality."

"Make it good," the sallow man advised, "you'll do no more."

"A most pleasant final effort," Mei Wong said as he quickly ringed the vase with lettering. "I have great love for the ancient Chinese alphabet."

There was a knock on the office door. Mei Wong lifted his eyes: "The messenger."

"No tricks," the intruder warned, "or I'll let you both have a dose of lead."

Mei Wong nodded and lifting his huge body from the chair padded quickly to the door and let the messenger in. Without any suspicious moves he placed the vase in a box and gave it to the boy. "Tell your master to handle it with care. It is barely dry," he warned as he saw the boy on his way again.

Closing the door Mei Wong faced the intruder once more. The gun was still pointed at him, "You are determined to take my life?" he asked.

"I've been waiting a long while to do just that," the sallow man said. "It will give me some satisfaction."

"Satisfaction!" Mei Wong

sighed and walked toward the large window overlooking the harbor. "Men derive pleasure from many things. As for myself, one of the happiest moments of the day comes when the late afternoon sun shines on the waters out there."

"Sunlight on cold cash would interest me more," the intruder stepped nearer. "Better think up a few words of greeting for your ancestors. You'll soon be meeting them."

"One moment," Mei Wong raised a staying hand, "since you place such a great premium on wealth I will make you an offer. Allow me a few minutes so that I may know the rich enjoyment of the shining waters one last time and I will repay you with treasure."

The sallow man eyed him suspiciously: "Where's the cash?"

"I will tell you after I have watched the sunset," Mei Wong said.

"Three minutes and that's it!" The intruder seated himself on the desk. They waited in silence. Mei Wong with his back to him placidly stared out the window.

Then the sallow man got to his feet again. "So now we'll settle matters."

"Not until after you drop your gun!" A strange new voice suddenly broke in from behind him.

Blake wheeled around to find himself face to face with a short, wiry Chinese flanked by three well-armed members of the Bombay police.

"Don't attempt making a break for it," their leader warned him.

As Blake realized the advice was good and dropped his gun to the floor, Mei Wong stepped forward: "Thank you, Tu San. It seemed you might not arrive in time."

"It is most fortunate my shop is in this building and that I opened the package as soon as it came," Tu San replied. "I expected the dragon vase to bear the usual ancient proverb. When, instead, I read the message: "Killer threatens me" repeated around it I guessed you must be in trouble."

Blake's face was dark with hatred. "Truth didn't matter when it came to saving your own skin!"

Mei Wong shook his head. "On the contrary. I was quite truthful. I promised a treasure if you would allow me a few minutes. Now I have bestowed it. One no amount of money could purchase—I prevented you from becoming a murderer."

THE saint's RATINGS

Clothes don't make the man

and covers don't make a book. Our wide-eyed reviewer is forced to admit that this month's collection of volumes could have their covers switched around without anyone telling the difference. A half-draped girl raises passion-filled eyes from each; guns and other lethal weapons are prominent by their absence. Don't let this keep you from the contents though. Two dimes and a nickel will buy some of the best realism, violence, sex — and humor — seen in a long time. You will find it a pleasant change from a steady diet of pitchforks when you read

OUR RATING SYSTEM:

- Three haloes: Outstanding
- Two haloes: Above average
- One halo: Passable reading
- A pitchfork: For the ashcan

CASE OF THE DEADLY KISS, by Milton K. Ozaki (Gold Medal, 25¢)

Suspenseful and realistic story of a murderer who killed only cops' girl friends. The detailed picture of police operations alone, is worth the price of admission.

FOR LOVE OF IMABELLE, by Chester Himes (Gold Medal, 25¢)

A violent picture of Harlem after dark, cut through with flashes of humor that light up a true picture of this city within a city. Realism is inextricably mixed with incredible exaggeration to produce a forceful and moving book. It gives rise to mixed emotions.

COME NIGHT, COME EVIL, by Jonathan Craig (Gold Medal, 25¢)

The Society of Parole Officers won't like this one, but everyone else should. How an over-sexed and evil parole officer gets his come-uppance from a framed parolee.

THE DICE SPELLED MURDER, by Al Fray (Dell, 25¢)

Factual and fast-moving account of how to make money with crooked dice —a cross between a larceny text book and a thriller.

BRAD DOLAN'S BLONDE CARGO, by William Fuller (Dell, 25¢)

If you yearn for the good old pulp magazines you should go for this story. If not—buy a pack of cigarettes, you'll get more for your money.

limehouse rhapsody

by . . . Sax Rohmer

THEY are cutting a sixty-foot arterial road right through Limehouse; and this is a story of the condemned Asiatic colony which London once called Chinatown; it is a story of which no mention may be found in any newspaper. The curious and the assiduous might come upon some evidence of it in the records of New Scotland Yard—if they were fortunate enough to obtain permission to search.

"Yes," said old Sam King in his crooning voice, "they are turning me out."

He leaned back in his chair, looking around the little room with slit-like meaningless eyes. I suppose he felt an affection for the place; he had lived there many years. I found it hard personally to imagine that any man could come to look upon it as a home. The mingled odors of the general store, which Sam King conducted, penetrated to this little apartment at the back. The door was closed for the hour was late; but here battling in the air were perfumes of Bombay duck, coffee, joss-stick, aniseed—all competing for

Some regard the executioner with horror. In the China he had known, men had honored him as an important official.

Sax Rohmer has contributed so much to the mythos of our times, even recently with his RE-ENTER FU MANCHU *(Gold Medal), that we may be forgiven the pride with which we bring you a different and subtler Rohmer, in a story from the Limehouse which both he—and the Doctor—know so well.*

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precedence over onion, nor should I have known which to back. I think in this odd chamber, sacred to Sam King and his friends, joss-stick was probably the winner, for the old Chinaman remained faithful to the gods of his fathers; the room boasted a tiny shrine. Its other decorations mirrored the personality of Josie, his creole wife, who always described herself as English.

"All my good friends go too," he continued meditatively, puffing at his large clay pipe in which he smoked some vile variety of shag, his eyes now quite closed. "Jo Long, the barber, has had his notice. Poor Jo; it is I expect the end of his prosperity—yes, I think so, Respected."

From "honorable and respected Sir," in the course of our friendship he had abbreviated the title to "Respected."

"There are many others, but you know them all. Yes, it is sad. Limehouse has been our home for many years. Some of us have made a little money here; now—"

He opened the slits of his eyes: the wrinkles at their corners, like tiny monkey's paws, were partially smoothed out. His misty regard, which I had sometimes likened to that of a kindly snake, became fixed upon me. He waved his hand in the direction of the rum bottle and, standing up, crossed the little room. Normally he wore European clothes, but (in my honor, I think) whenever he received me in the sanctum he attired himself in a loose blue robe. I thought, as he crossed with his queerly springy step, that I had rarely seen such a shoulder span for a man of his stature.

I accepted his invitation and helped myself sparingly. It was a Myers vintage of Old Jamaica normally unobtainable in London.

"The limes," said Sam King, glancing back, "are on the tray. You have complained, Respected, of my Chinese hospitality in the past, but now that we understand one another, I say to you—'Help yourself.' "

He sold green limes in his store which I know he got from West India Dock. Where he obtained his rum was Sam King's personal business.

Turning around, he faced me as I sliced the juicy fruit. His agility in a man of his years was astonishing. The wrinkled yellow face resembled now a mask of serenity. On his shoulder perched the captive he had released from a wire-fronted cage which, contrary to his wife's desires, stood upon a little mahogany table in a corner of the room. Emperor, his pet mongoose, stared at me wickedly.

"I call him Emperor," Sam King had once informed me in his monotonous but extraordinarily perfect English, "because although so small yet he is king of his kind. Some of my neighbors are rat-ridden, but there is not a

rat in my house. If I lived in a snake-infested jungle, no snake would ever cross my threshold."

He reached up a lean, muscular hand and stroked the flat, wicked head.

"Emperor," he crooned, "my Emperor, you are surrounded by enemies, but I am Emperor's friend and Emperor is mine."

Presently, when we were settled in our chairs again, Sam's clay pipe and my briar going freely, the mongoose watching me in a way which suggested a meditated spring at my throat:

"Where shall you go, Sam," I asked, "when you leave here?"

He caressed the hot bowl of his pipe. Faintly, but very faintly, sounds of the quarter penetrated to the smoke-laden room in which now the odor of shag definitely predominated.

"I have made money enough, Respected, to return to Hankow."

"You will return to China, to Hankow, your native town?"

"Not my native town. I was born in a northern valley of the Yellow River where the opium poppies grow. But in Hankow I lived my life before"—he performed a curious gesture, more like a wriggle than a shrug, which displayed the tremendous muscularity of his shoulders—"before the old regime was ended. You understand, Respected?"

"Yes, I understand."

As a matter of fact it was not too clear, but I did not wish to interrupt the old Chinaman's confidences.

"The Province was then administered," he continued, completely closing his eyes, "by a Mandarin of high rank. That was an age in which men knew how to live and how to die; the mellowed age of old China—a passing China, perhaps, but still exquisite, as a beautiful woman who possesses the secret of growing old remains always beautiful. Yes"—he nodded—"I shall go back to Hankow."

"You expect of course to find it much changed?"

"Ah! of course, Respected. But I think I can make a place for myself there in which peacefully to pass away those years which remain to me."

I was trying to find suitable words in which to ask Sam King about the reactions of his young wife to the projected change, when the mongoose shot like a yellow streak from side to side of the room, and began with method and precision to endeavor to bore his way under the closed door. I all but dropped my pipe; then the sound of a key in a lock somewhere beyond dimly reached my ears.

Someone, presumably Josie, Mrs. Sam King, was coming in through the shop. I heard a man's voice, a deep caressing voice, and I glanced aside and upward as my old friend rose from his chair and

crossed to the door. His face was quite expressionless.

Even without hearing the voice I could have identified Mrs. Sam's escort. It was Louis, her cousin, a creole steward employed by the Island Line, trading between West India Dock and the Leewards. Sam King opened the door as the pair came in.

Josie entered first. She turned and kissed Sam on the lobe of his left ear. She was all smiles; her dark eyes were dancing gaily. She was smartly dressed and undeniably attractive; in her 'teens she had been a beauty of her type, with the slender, upright figure which tells of mothers and grandmothers who carried burdens upon their heads.

"Hello, sir," came the deep voice, "glad to see you."

Louis entered behind Josie and, advancing, extended his hand. He too was well turned out in a neat gray flannel suit. His shipmates, I happened to know, had nicknamed him after a popular film star; and except that Louis was a step or two nearer the jungle, the resemblance could not be denied. I had an idea there was an Asiatic streak, an idea which later events tended to confirm.

"How are you, Louis?" I said; "when did you get in?"

"We berthed this morning, sir. We're off again on Tuesday."

His manners were unexceptionable; in fact, in the main I didn't like the fellow. All I disliked about him was his somewhat obvious relationship to Mrs. Sam King. A cousin he may have been —one couldn't doubt that they hailed from the same part of the world—but he certainly took full advantage of the kinship.

"Sit down, my pearl," crooned old Sam King, placing a chair for his wife. "This is a happy occasion. Louis, tonight it will be a labor of love to prepare, as you know so well how to do, four of those punches which we esteem. We have an old friend with us; one of those rare friends who understands us all."

I detected a curious intonation in the crooning voice, when my thoughts were broken by a scream from Josie.

"Sam!" she shrieked, "Sam, lock that damn thing up!"

"She was standing bolt upright, her eyes fixed in terror upon the mongoose. Emperor, from the other side of the room, was regarding her fixedly, and I must confess that I should not have counted his regard a friendly one.

"My child"—old Sam King squeezed her shoulder reassuringly—"will you never learn to know those who love you?"

"Lock the damn thing up!" she demanded angrily.

Louis, who had crossed to the table upon which the refreshments stood, turned and took a step in the direction of the mongoose, but old Sam brushed him aside. When I say brushed him aside, this was exactly the impres-

sion I derived. The Chinaman's left arm swept out to intercept the creole, and Louis staggered back like a man who has been struck a heavy blow, clutching at the wall for support.

"They are angry with you, my Emperor," Sam King murmured, picking up the sleek little animal and holding it to his breast. "You make them angry, and so you must be locked up, my small friend."

He returned the mongoose to his wired cage and then smilingly rejoined us.

"Why did you let the thing out?" Josie asked; "you know I hate it."

"I did not know, Josie, my precious, that you would be joining us."

"Let's forget it," Louis suggested, darting a quick side glance of his dark eyes in the direction of Sam King. "You're jumpy, Josie. A real drink is what you want, and it's coming to you now."

Josie, rather ashamed of herself, dropped back into her seat, and favored me with a brilliant smile.

"Sam knows I'm frightened of the mongoose," she explained in an intimate whisper (she employed an odd accent which she believed to denote culture). "Besides—it smells the place out."

The episode was forgotten. I could hear Emperor in his shadowy retreat scuffling up and down furiously; but conviviality reigned in the room and old Sam King chuckled delightedly at Louis's anecdotes. Josie watched the *raconteur* with adoring eyes. I don't know what the hour was when Louis stood up, and:

"I expect you'll want to turn in, Sam," he said, "but I have promised Josie to take her down to Mrs. Joy's for a couple of dances before they close. I know you won't mind."

"Why should I mind?" the old Chinaman replied. "Youth is gay and should be gay. I am happy in what I have, and wish that which I have to be happy also."

When the pair had gone, calling back laughing farewells:

"I also must be going, my friend," I said. (Emperor was apparently running vertically around his cage and right across its roof.) "What does your wife say to the change? Is she looking forward to living in China?"

I realized that I had put the thing rather bluntly, but the words were spoken and I could not recall them. Old Sam King, who, the outer door closed, had leaned back in his chair and lowered his eyelids, now turned upon me that regard as of a benevolent snake; it was somewhat disconcerting.

"My wife will go before me," he replied softly, "to prepare my house, Respected, as it is fitting that a wife should do."

Some months elapsed, and I saw nothing of Sam King, but I often thought about him. I was determined once more before he

left his old quarters to share with him a glass or two of that wonderful rum and to endeavor, if possible, to gather a little more of his philosophy, to learn something further of the mystery of his life during those distant years in China. He was reputed to be one of the wealthiest men in Limehouse. He was much respected—at times I had thought, feared. Yet something there was about him which did not fit into the pattern of the man's mentality which I had weaved with the few threads at my disposal. A philosopher he was, and undoubtedly a man of deep and curious culture.

I remember very clearly the incidents of that last interview. I timed my visit to Thames-side as nearly as possible to coincide with the closing of the store. Indeed, old Sam was about to turn out the lights in his shop when I arrived. The cordiality of his greeting was unmistakable. He rested his hands upon my shoulders (their grip was like that of two vices) and looked with his dim, strange eyes into mine.

"Respected friend," he said, "you are very welcome."

It was a bleak, cheerless night; a rainy mist drifted past the windows. The narrow streets of Limehouse sang a song of desolation, almost a lament for that which was passing. There were dim lights, a few slinking figures; even the life of the ancient waterway seemed to be hushed. Limehouse bowed its head beneath a lowering pall. I glanced around the store. The shelves were all but stripped; the place had a starved look.

"Ah," came the sing-song voice, out of shadows for he had turned off the lamps, "I am selling up my stock; this week I go."

"What! So soon?"

He took my arm and guided me along behind the darkened counter, then bowed, as he always bowed upon the threshold of the sanctum, bidding me to enter. When the door closed I felt that the stuffy little room possessed the silence of a tomb.

"Tonight, Respected," he said, "you must permit me. The nearer I draw to China, the more Chinese I become. And soon, very soon now, I shall be in the land of my ancestors."

I glanced about. The sanctum, too, was stripped. All those gewgaws which spoke with the mincing voice of Mrs. Sam King, were missing. It was a barren little room. But the shrine remained, and now, a faint scuffling sound attracted my attention to that corner where, upon a Victorian mahogany table, Emperor's cage reposed. The wicked, beady eyes regarded me fixedly.

Sam King placed a glass in my hand, raising his own.

"To your long life and happiness in China," I said.

"To all of that happiness you desire," he replied, "which would be true happiness—to your con-

tinued health and our unbroken friendship."

We drank, solemnly.

"Look around, my friend," Sam King continued; "you note the absence of most of my few worldly possessions. Only Emperor and I remain. It is a fitting thing and a very welcome thing that you should visit me tonight. But I am unhappy to receive you in this bare and inhospitable room."

"*You* are here, Sam, and it was you I came to see."

"You honor me."

We were silent for a while. Vaguely I could hear water dripping somewhere, and Emperor, evidently satisfied that I was an acceptable visitor scuffled about at the back of his cage. Otherwise we were alone with the old perfumes of the place among which that of Sam's shag began now to assert its usual predominance. I had never detected any trace of opium smoking in Sam King's establishment, and indeed he had assured me that he was not addicted to this very common practice of his countrymen.

"The wise man takes pleasure in the company of a friend," he said presently; "for only a wise man knows one. Sometimes in your writings, Respected, you have spoken evil of my countrymen. Is it not true?"

"It is true," I replied, "but only in a limited sense. I have portrayed some of your race, perhaps, in an unfavorable light, but never the Chinese as a whole. There are evil men in China as there are evil men in every country. Your words, Sam, are not just."

"I spoke the words," he answered, "merely to hear your reply. In friendship, misunderstanding is impossible."

As he ceased speaking I found myself listening for something else which I expected to hear: exactly what, I didn't know. All I heard was the dripping of rain, until a piece of ash dropped from the fire in the little grate, and made me start suddenly.

"To sit in the shade beside some willow-bordered canal," Sam King continued, "and to contemplate the infinite beauties of nature. This, Respected, is a fit occupation for the aged philosopher."

He closed his eyes and became silent. I remembered that I had committed the social sin of failing to inquire after his wife, therefore:

"I trust your wife is in the best of health," I said.

Sam King did not open his eyes, but he removed the clay pipe from between wrinkled lips.

"My wife," he replied, "is a fortunate woman, for she enjoys all that she has earned. She is at present engaged in bidding her farewells to Limehouse. I thank you, Respected, for your interest."

Silence fell again, broken only by the scuffling of the mongoose,

then: "As you have seen," said Sam King, "most of my poor possessions are gone. But one which has sometimes attracted your friendly interest still remains. Indeed, I have kept it for you as a parting gift and as a token of the honorable pleasure which you have afforded me."

He reached down under the chair in which he was seated, and took out a short, heavy, curved sword, the hilt bound with plaited catgut, the blade concealed in a shagreen scabbard. It was a very beautiful piece of finely tempered steel, the upper part of the blade curiously damascened; I had often admired it.

He drew the blade from the scabbard.

"Really," I protested, "your generosity is too great. You treasure this sword. I couldn't dream of accepting it."

Sam King raised the blade before his eyes, and then performed a curious semi-circular horizontal movement with it—a movement executed at lightning speed; an oddly significant movement.

"You may not refuse my gift," he replied, "for if you did so I should send it to your house by a sure messenger. Nor will you refuse it, Respected, you who are a maker of stories, when I have told you its history, or some part of it. For the blade is older even than I, and I am very old." He slipped it back in its polished scabbard, and stood up, holding the weapon extended upon his palms. "For you—my friend."

"I thank you sincerely, Sam," I said; "I shall try in my humble way to do honor to the history of this most generous present."

He indicated that I should refill my glass and when once more we were seated on either side of the dwindling fire he began . . .

"During the time that I lived in Hankow, it was the seat, as I have told you, of a just and powerful government represented by a Mandarin whose rule was wise, but firm. In much that you have written, Respected, you have conveyed to those who know no better, an impression that the Chinese are a cruel race. I wish to explain to you that what you mistake for cruelty is in reality an indispensable weapon in the hand of justice. One thing I would have you understand, honored and respected friend: the Chinese do not fear death. The electric chair, the axe, the rope, these expedients of your Western culture, have no terrors for my countrymen. Punishment of the criminal, therefore, is a very difficult problem with us.

"At the time of which I speak (but at any moment that my senile chatter tires you, I beg that you will say so) the Mandarin-governor of the Province to whom I have referred, found himself called upon to deal with a series of river piracies accompanied by most atrocious murders and serious loss of valuable property.

The pirates, recruited from the scum of the river people, were invariably executed when captured. One by one they would step before the public executioner in the stone courtyard of the prison, and with a single sweep of his sword, he would sever each man's head from his body."

He paused, smoking, and I watched him furtively. His eyes were closed; his face was a yellow expressionless mask.

"Among you, of the West, the public executioner is regarded with horror. Among us, in the China of those days, he was regarded with fear and respect. He was an important official of the State, a master swordsman, and fellow of the ancient Guild. You see, Respected, my countrymen are logical. If the Mandarin may pronounce the death sentence with honor, the public executioner may honorably carry it out. In the case of these pirates it was not punishment but an elimination of the undesirable. It is of the leaders that I wish to speak. Some of these scoundrels were men of good family—shameful to relate: none feared death."

Sam King paused, stood up and, crossing the room, took the mongoose from its cage. The little creature to my surprise seemed anxious to escape from its master; its ferrety eyes kept darting into another corner of the room. But old Sam held it firmly, and returned to his chair, resting the feverishly active little beast upon his blue-robed knee (for he had not failed to attire himself in my honor), one lean muscular hand restraining the mongoose.

I thought he was about to speak again, but instead, he sat, head tilted slightly backward, and seemed to be listening. I, too, began to listen. Dimly, above the monotonous dripping of rainwater I detected the sound of a distant steamer's whistle.

"Ah!" murmured Sam King, "it is the *Island Maid* leaving her dock."

The *Island Maid* was Louis's ship, but in Sam's softly spoken words I could detect neither regret nor sadness. But I immediately jumped to the conclusion that the farewells of Josie, to which he had referred, had probably taken place on board the *Island Maid;* so that in the course of the next half hour I constantly expected her return. . . .

"Certain of the organizers and leaders of these outrages, were, I say, outcasts from highly respected families. And in regard to such persons when they fell into his hands, the Mandarin-governor employed a series of deterrents designed to discourage others from following similarly evil paths. Some of these deterrents were of his own invention, others he had inherited from his predecessors. All came within the department of the public executioner."

He moved his hand in a slight

gesture—and the mongoose instantly escaped, shooting in arrow-like fashion across the room. In that corner upon which his fierce little eyes had constantly been fixed, Emperor began to make a determined attack upon the flooring, as if intent upon burrowing a way through the store beyond. Sam King stood up quietly.

"Ah, Emperor, Emperor," he crooned, "why are you so restless? There are no rats there for you, my little friend."

He gathered up the mongoose and gently but efficiently returned the struggling animal to its cage, closing the wired front. Then, knocking out the ash from the hot bowl of his pipe into the embers of the dying fire, he resumed his seat.

"The first of these deterrents which I shall have the honor to describe to you," he continued, "was named by the Mandarin, Pearl of Exquisite Silence. He held a theory that virtue is lost in a stream of words; therefore a device, similar to a split fir cone, but having powerful springs in the center, was placed in the culprit's mouth, ensuring silence and a contemplative mind. Thus one who by evil counsel had seduced others to wickedness, would sit silent in the iron cage in the public square of Hankow, watched by many who had come under the spell of his eloquence.

"I have known such a person to preserve the Exquisite Silence for three days and three nights, for the wicked are tenacious of life."

He ceased speaking, and my brain, set on fire by the very placidity with which Sam King spoke of this ghastly punishment, conjured up a faint moan, pitiful, inarticulate; it came from above, it came from below, it came from the embers of the dying fire. Actually, I told myself it came from my own imagination.

"But to meet the case of some who had climbed high in the criminal world," he continued, his voice a soothing murmur, "the Mandarin devised the Four Steps of Understanding. In the top of the iron cage to which I have referred was an opening large enough to admit the head of the prisoner; an iron collar was then so fixed that the head could not be withdrawn. The culprit's feet rested each upon four large stones. Two stones were removed daily; sympathizers were allowed to approach near enough to supply him with food and water upon the end of a bamboo rod. This deterrent justly enjoyed great repute, for as the criminal had mounted, now he descended. But"—he opened his eyes and turned to me—"do I tire you?"

"No." I shook my head. "But you horrify me."

The mongoose began a determined attack upon the floor of his cage, seemingly intent upon burrowing a way out of it, and

again my heated imagination conjured up a sound like a muffled groan. But, listening intently for a repetition, all that I could hear was the dripping of the rain, the sigh of a rising wind and the scratching of the little creature in its wire-fronted cage.

"Chief, however, of these deterrents," Sam King went on—"and I include the Jacket of Philosophy—was The Gate of Divine Desire, a device which presented itself to the Mandarin in a dream. You must know, Respected, that all men incline more particularly to one pleasure than to any of the others. Thus, I might be a lover of wine and you a lover of women; a third might live to accumulate gold; but in every man there is some hidden appetite, and the Gate of Divine Desire was designed at once to correct such a vice, and also, at the moment of dissolution, to compel the misguided man to reject it and to go to the land of his ancestors purged of this lust for which he had sacrificed so much. In long contemplation of the forbidden pleasure, the pursuit of which had brought him to his present pass, the culprit learned the vanity of the world, and so enabled the eyes of his spirit to contemplate higher things."

His voice had sunk almost to a whisper; now, it ceased altogether and abruptly . . . for there came a sound of loud knocking upon the outer door.

"Hello, Sam," came a gruff voice from the store outside; "on your own?"

"A mutual and respected friend is with me. Please come in."

A moment later the old Chinaman re-entered the little room, accompanied by Detective Sergeant Worset, whom I had met before.

"Good evening, sir," said the detective.

He glanced aside in a curious way at Sam King. The latter courteously conducted him to a chair, and began to prepare a drink.

"Although I had wished to spare our mutual friend," he said, "the painful truth, in order that his last memories of my house should be happy ones, I think, as it has fallen out, that it is best he should know. Is there any news?"

"Yes," the detective sergeant replied, "there is." He moved his chair furtively further away from the wire-fronted cage from which the mongoose was regarding him fixedly. "I don't know what it means—we can only wait and see. Thank you, Sam."

He sipped his glass of rum appreciatively.

"I think it would be courteous," said Sam King, "to disclose to our friend the facts of my unhappy situation. But first—your news?"

"Not on board," the detective replied cryptically.

"You are sure of this?"

"Certain; unless stowed away."

Sam King dropped back into

his chair, slowly nodding his yellow, wrinkled head.

"Ah!" he murmured.

"It's this way, sir," said the detective sergeant, turning in my direction: "Sam, here, has been away for two or three days settling up affairs he had in Bristol; and to cut a long story short—I don't know why he hasn't told you—when he got back, his missis had sold him up."

"Sold him up?"

"That's it, sir. As you know, he had some pretty good stuff, jade and bronze mostly, and she got rid of the lot. We've traced part of it, but the legal position isn't too clear. The point is—she's got the money. She didn't leave much, did she, Sam?"

Eyes closed, head tilted backward, old Sam King slowly shook his head.

"The sword," he murmured, "the sword—she feared the sword. The sword—and Emperor."

Detective Sergeant Dorset laughed shortly.

"I don't know why she left the sword," he commented, "but I can understand her leaving the mongoose."

I thought that I could understand her leaving the sword if she knew its history. But nevertheless I was sincerely sorry for Sam King. Always he had been a mysterious figure; tonight, almost wantonly, I thought, he had deepened the mystery. What was his purpose?

"You've asked me to tell the story, Sam," Dorset went on, "so I take it you don't mind if I say that the lady who has disappeared was a hostess in a Cardiff dance hall at the time that you met her and married her, prior to which, as inquiries show, she had acted in a similar capacity in Central America."

"In Panama and in Colon," crooned Sam King. "She was born in Trinidad."

"Exactly." The detective cleared his throat. "Well, any other details as to her motive in bolting just as you're off to China, and so on, I think I had better leave to you, Sam. But although, as we discovered, she was booked on the *Island Maid*, she hadn't joined the ship at the time of sailing. Will it make a big difference to you—I mean, the stuff she took?"

Sam King opened his eyes and turned to the speaker, regarding him almost benevolently.

"Much that she took was worthless," he replied; "some few pieces I regret. But it may not be too late to recover them. In the years that I have lived and worked in Limehouse I have accumulated a little money. I thank you for your interest, but financially she has not ruined me."

"I'm glad," said Dorset, bluntly, and took a drink, I thought with added relish.

A northeasterly wind was creeping up which developed later into half a gale; its whining

was added now to the drip-drip of the rain-water. But in the silence which followed the detective's last words, I thought again —but would have dismissed the thought—that I heard a muffled groan. Dorset, however, had apparently heard it also, for he asked, "What was that?" staring about him sharply.

"The wind," crooned Sam King. "It gets into the old chimney." He turned to me; his gaze as of a kindly reptile. "You have heard it before, Respected?"

"Yes," I replied and began to load my pipe. "It is an unpleasant sound—and an unpleasant night."

Dorset stood up, sighing regretfully.

"It's a brute of a night," he agreed, "and going to be worse. I've got a lot of jobs to do yet. Well, Sam, I must push on. Nobody more sorry than I am about what's happened. It looks as though she may have changed her mind at the last moment." He buttoned up his overcoat and started for the door. "If she turns up I think I can leave it to you to deal with her. Good night!" He nodded in my direction: "Good night, sir."

"Good night, Sergeant Dorset," I answered.

Sam King rose to escort his visitor to the door, and when I heard Dorset's gruff voice die away as he stepped out into the rainswept street, and heard the closing of the shop door, a cold sense of desolation descended upon me. I stood up; I was anxious to go. My old Chinese friend had been betrayed by his young creole wife and in a very dirty fashion. I was sorry, for I had esteemed him for a number of years. But the glimpse which he had permitted me to obtain into that vanished China, whose passing he plainly regretted, had made me acutely uncomfortable. The fire was nearly out. The mongoose crouched, motionless, in his cage, watching me.

"But, Respected!" Sam King exclaimed as he returned and found me standing, "why must you leave so soon?—and on this night? I would have spared you the story of my private sorrows, but now that you know it, let us drink the cup of consolation together."

We had a final drink, old Sam sitting motionless in his chair. And as I watched him I seemed to begin to understand that he was waiting for me to say something. Perhaps I was dull—indeed, I know now that I was. But at least a glimmering of what he waited for came to me.

"You have my very sincere sympathy," I said. "I don't blame Josie entirely; I blame someone who accepted your hospitality and abused it. Forgive me, it isn't my business, and perhaps I should not have said that."

"You have said well," he mur-

mured. "The jewel is innocent; the thief is guilty. But pray forget this small matter."

"I am trying to understand your assertion that I have misrepresented your race; and in your present account of justice under the old regime, I begin to see that what might be a corrective in London would be useless in Hankow. I thank you again for the sword; it shall never leave my possession, I shall treasure it always. I am sorry to part from you, for I suppose we shan't meet again."

Sam King stood up, opened his eyes and regarded me fixedly. Then he rested his muscular hands upon my shoulders and gripped hard.

"But why not?" he asked softly, "why not? You are a traveler and Hankow today is not very far. I shall be there."

I met his regard. Emperor had begun to scuffle again behind me, and the wind was howling in uncanny fashion around the building. I found myself wondering what had become of Josie. Perhaps Louis had let her down at the last moment?

"One day," I said, "I shall come to Hankow and look for you, Sam."

"He who seeks assiduously, shall find," the old Chinaman replied, his entire face wrinkled into one of the few smiles which I had ever beheld upon it. "I have loved you, Respected, because you have tried to understand me and to understand my people. Your honorable friendship has raised me in my own esteem, and the only way in which I could strive to repay it was to tell you a story. Do not write the story yet—wait. Its proper proportions will come to you as in a dream—as even the Gate of Divine Desire presented itself to my exalted master, the Mandarin."

"Your master?"

"Yes, Respected friend. For seven years I fulfilled the honorable duties of public executioner in Hankow. . . ."

In the week that followed my last interview with Sam King I turned the whole strange business over in my mind, observing his injunction not to endeavour to write it up yet. It was a colorful tangle into which I could weave no proper plan, but I rang up Limehouse on three occasions and, not without difficulty, managed to get Dorset on the line. Sam King had left for an unknown destination upon the morning following my visit: almost certainly he had returned to China. But of his errant wife there was no news. It was supposed that Louis had sailed with the *Island Maid* for the West Indies, but nobody had taken the trouble to find out.

Then the housebreakers got to work and Sam King's store was one of the first to go. I read about it in a daily newspaper and experienced a queer pang. I had

loved the old Causeway and had had many friends there. Progress it might be, but with the sweeping away of those spicy odors, mingled with that of Bombay duck, coffee and onions, something of old London Town must go forever. Wide, straight-traffic ways would speed over the spot where Sam King's assistants had made up their accounts with brushes of thick Indian ink on old pakapu papers. The world was changing. Could it offer anything better than the things which it destroyed?

The executioner's sword hung at the back of my desk. A promise I had given to Sam King, and however bloody its history, the thing should never leave my possession. Then, one night, when Sam King and his affairs had temporarily faded from my memory, came a call from Dorset. . . .

An hour later I stood amongst the mounds of rubbish, rubble, tarpaulin, timber and brick-dust on the spot where the general store had been. Two constables were on duty, although the hour was late. It was a gloomy night, but rain was not actually falling.

"This way, sir," said the detective. "Nothing has been disturbed because we thought it just possible that you might be able to throw some light on the facts of the case."

I went down a ladder through a jagged hole in a concrete floor into a deep square pit, brick-faced all around—to find another constable on duty.

"All right, Evans," said the detective sergeant; "go up and wait for me."

"Very good, sir."

As the slow, heavy footsteps went creaking up the ladder, I looked around me. Dorset had produced a torch.

"This place was half under the living room," he explained, "half under the shop. Sam King must have built it himself—when, I don't know, nor how he did it without arousing suspicion. But after all, his wife was more often out than at home, and nobody else lived in. The doctor has been and gone, but nothing has been disturbed. What are your conclusions, sir?"

Above the jagged opening a leaden sky seemed to rest almost upon my head. There was no breeze, and those dim, mechanical sounds which belong to the Thames River clanged an appropriate Limehouse chorus. What I saw was this, an emaciated body, almost a skeleton, lashed to a heavy teak chair apparently clamped to the floor of the cellar; the ghastly shrunken body of a man dressed in a gray flannel suit!

As Dorset directed the light of his torch upon the horrible face, swiftly a memory came, long, lank black hair, low upon the forehead, low upon the cheekbones. I closed my eyes for a mo-

ment, suddenly nauseated by the reek of mortality.

"Good God!" I exclaimed. "It's Louis, the steward!"

"There was a thing in his mouth," said Dorset, "a sort of expanding gag. It had fallen out—when his jaws collapsed, I suppose. They've got that along at the station; otherwise, he's undisturbed. Now look here!"

He turned a beam of light upon the wall opposite the dead man lashed in the chair. It was a roughly made brick wall, but on it a number of photographs were fastened. They were photographs of Josie, Sam King's wife! Some of them I had seen before, showing her in dancing costume; others, which must have belonged to her earlier life in Colon and Panama, I had not seen. . . .

"He died of starvation, or strangulation, or both. According to the surgeon he's been dead for weeks. What's the idea? Can you throw any light on it? You knew Sam King very well. Why all these photographs of his wife—some of them not decent, if I may say so—stuck on the wall where the dying man had to watch them unless he shut his eyes? The inspector hopes you can help us. He'll be here at any moment."

TENDERHEARTED BLUEBEARD

When James P. Watson was arrested, back in 1920, Dr. Edward Huntington Williams, famous psychiatrist and alienist, described him as,—"A medium-sized, mild-spoken man of about forty-two years of age, quiet and somewhat deferential in his attitude towards others. He is not cringing or servile, but rather gives the impression of possessing a humble and respectful attitude."

Watson had just confessed to marrying 25 times, usually bigamously, and to murdering sixteen of these wives. He himself admitted, by the way, that he was "tenderhearted and easily moved to tears at the sight of sadness or distress." . . . Life must have had its complications, however, particularly in Tacoma, Washington, where he was married to four women at the same time, posing as a U. S. Secret Service operator to explain his frequent absences from home.

His method was simple. Each would make a will in the other's favor, and at one time or another she would sign her name at the bottom of a sheet of writing paper. Eventually—after she was dead, of course—her relatives would hear from her about the lovely trip she and her husband were about to take. By this time he had, as he put it, wrestled with himself. Something would tell him *You must not* and then—*You must.* There were times when he felt as if two forces were fighting within him. One force would usually win.

squared

by . . . Rose Kohn

The eyes of the two men met briefly. Both had known for a long time how to conceal their thoughts and emotions.

DR. RALPH MASTERS took off his glasses, polished them and returned them to the bridge of his nose. His gesture was similar to a pipe smoker who reams and fills his pipe meticulously to allow time for a judicious choice of words.

"I really don't know, Henry, how I can say it any stronger without sounding alarming and I certainly don't wish to do that. The 'Big Deal' you have hanging fire is not the issue. I simply can't allow you to go any further without an exploratory operation."

"An exploratory?" Henry Kemble half raised himself in his chair. "I thought you said you didn't want to sound alarming."

Dr. Master's hand again reached for his glasses.

"For heavens sake, Ralph!" his friend burst out impatiently. "Leave your glasses alone. You don't need that gesture with me. Remember I know you! I know what you think." Curbing himself he laughed a little ruefully. "At least I know *how* you think and that's more important than 'what.' All I want to know is why the sudden pressure? This deal I'm working on isn't some piddling

A man dreams that he allows himself to be the instrument of a good friend's death. Rose Simon Kohn, California writer who has worked in TV on the Coast and author of the comedy, "A Widow's Might —," *here brings us a tense short-short based on such a challenging situation.*

million dollar affair. I'm talking about a few hundred millions, Ralph."

For a moment the eyes of the two men met. But the glance revealed only how well each had learned to conceal his fleeting thoughts and emotions: the one because he was a doctor and felt free to reveal only that which wisdom dictated; the other, because the world of international finance was a vast and desperate poker-game.

"Speaking of 'piddling sums,' " Dr. Masters smiled and broke the tension. "Let's say that's just the amount I need and the easiest way for me to get it is to operate on you. So I'll expect you in the hospital tomorrow. By noon."

As Kemble started to protest, Dr. Masters got up. "Remember I also know you, Henry. If I thought it was a question of going to another doctor to confirm my decision—" he shrugged. "That's the comfort in being enviably at the head of one's profession. You would no more want a confirmation of my opinion in this matter, than I would seek to confirm your financial advice. That is," he smiled wryly, "had I ever been fortunate to have gotten any from you."

"What do you expect to find when you open me up?" Kemble asked, ignoring the implied reproach.

"Probably nothing serious. But for six months you've had persistently increasing symptoms. Neither X-ray nor lab tests have revealed anything. And yet to say it's psychosomatic and let it go at that—that's playing with fire."

There was a momentary silence while the man who juggled with millions balanced the known and unknown against each other. He got up. "As the saying goes, 'You're the doctor.' I'll check in tomorrow. Make the necessary arrangements."

Dr. Masters rose, walked with Kemble to the door, arm around his shoulder. "Give my love to Lucille. Tell her to leave the worrying to me."

He watched Henry Kemble's brisk step toward the elevator. How characteristic! A decision reached. Acted on. No shilly-shallying. No regrets. No backward look. A hundred million dollars fluttering away without a sigh.

And the passion of years welled up in Masters, stifling him. The resentment, hatred, envy, cloaked since boyhood in the garb of friendship, overwhelmed and choked him.

Back at his desk, indifferent to the flashing of lights demanding his attention, he yielded to the sweet taste of hate. Savoured it undiluted.

How easily everything had come to Henry Kemble. Even way back in school. Tops in class, tops in the field, tops with the girls. He had walked through life without a

struggle. Respect, honor, prestige —he had them all without working for them. Without having earned them. Without—yes, without deserving them.

And money! How money had attached itself to Henry! While *he* had had to struggle for everything he had. Driving—always driving to keep abreast of him. There had been times when he had swallowed pride, had asked Henry for investment advice. Always the same answer: "I can't do it, Ralph. You work too hard for your money. If things didn't turn out, I'd never forgive myself."

The irony of it never ceased rankling. Yes, he had struggled every step of the way. Without help from his friend Henry. But in the drive he had lost more than he had gained. For in his life there had been no time for love. And when at last there was time enough—it was too late.

Sitting there, thinking now of Lucille, he allowed himself again the luxury of an ever reoccurring dream: Henry dead and Lucille turning to him in her despair.

For one swift moment, a new element—acknowledged almost instantly as impossible—entered the dream. He allowed himself to be the instrument of Henry's death. The operating room—a moment of feigned dizziness—a slip of the knife— How easy. How foolproof. And how impossible!

Everything he had rested on his unsullied reputation . . .

Then suddenly, compactly, in its entirety, he remembered—

It had happened about two years ago. After a round of golf, Ralph, Henry and two mutual friends had been sitting over Scotch and sodas. Their conversation, stimulated by an impending execution, had drifted to the value of capital punishment as a deterrent to murder. One of the men said it must be effective or he would have killed his mother-in-law long ago.

"I'll have no part of that mother-in-law joke," Henry had replied with smiling reflection, "But capital punishment is a deterrent all right. Let me put it this way: If I knew I had only a month to live, so I could be certain I would not have to pay the penalty for my crime, there are four persons I would unhesitatingly kill."

The others had viewed it as a joke. Henry had meant them to think so. But watching him, familiar with each shade of expression no matter how fleeting, Ralph had known how true Henry spoke. He had meant what he said.

Ralph closed his eyes. Saw Henry stripped of everything he prized: fame, fortune, life—and Lucille.

The operation was uneventful. Recovery complete. And Lucille was giving a cocktail party to celebrate.

He pulled out Henry's chart,

studied it: "A benign cyst pressing against the spinal column. Prognosis: complete recovery should be expected." He smiled, initialed the chart and returned it to its alphabetical spot.

He watched the last of the guests bid their hosts good-bye. Each had been someone of international renown. Whom else could an international financier attract other than the illustrious? His thoughts were interrupted by the approach of his hostess. How serene she looked. Time had lent a patina to the lustre of her beauty. How deeply he still loved her.

He held his hand out to her and she took it with one of her rare smiles.

"I can't tell you how grateful I am, Ralph."

"You look tired, Lucille," he said with just the right admixture of "doctor" and "solicitous friend." "Why don't you lie down while Henry and I talk 'shop' a bit?"

She gave his hand a grateful squeeze, kissed her husband lightly and left them alone.

"Well, Ralph," Henry smiled at his friend, "You had your way and I feel like a new man."

Dr. Masters sat down, averting his eyes. "In a sense that makes what I have to say even harder. Sit down, Henry." Watching the other sit slowly down, he realized with a flood of exaltation that what he meant to say was as good as told. It was in the silence. In the frightened look in Henry's eyes. In the whitening line around his mouth. In the drawn skin around the knuckles as the hands closed on the arms of the chair.

"Then it isn't a benign cyst?"

After a moment, Masters shook his head. "I thought it best to let you believe that until you had made a complete post-operative recovery." He watched Henry's tongue move over his dry lips.

"How long do I have?"

"Six weeks at top." He waited until this sank in. "I knew you would want to know. It is your right. You will need to put your house in order."

"There is no room for error?"

"We were six months too late, Henry. If I gave you a shred of hope I would be false to you." As the other remained quiet, staring ahead of him, he went on: "If I seem cruel, forgive me. But I have learned not to withhold these truths. Each person is entitled to determine as well as he can, the course of his numbered days. I found that knowledge brings courage."

After what seemed an endless pause, Henry looked up. "I am grateful to you, believe me."

"I wish it were anyone but me telling you this, Henry."

"I don't want Lucille to know."

"As you wish—"

"If you don't mind, I'd like to be alone now."

Masters got up, placed a gentle

hand on the other's shoulder careful not to let their eyes meet lest the excitement he felt betray him. He gave the shoulder a slight squeeze, then left hastily.

For a long while Henry sat in his chair, the bitter acrid taste of death in his mouth. He looked about the room filled with priceless possessions.

"Six weeks at the most . . ."

Six weeks! Ralph was right. One had to get one's house in order. Do what must be done. He walked across the room to an enormous desk, magnificently carved. Sitting down he drew out a sheet of paper.

Carefully, in a horizontal line he wrote:

1—
2—
3—
4—

He stared at the numbers finding in them a sudden magic. After a moment, with great care, next to the figure "one" he wrote down the first name on his list: Dr. Ralph Masters.

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a man's foes

by . . . Pearl Buck

There are many ways in which you may fight — openly — or quietly, patiently, waiting until everybody understands.

MARTIN LIU was bewildered as he stepped out of the train at the railroad station in Peking. Nothing was changed, it was exactly as he had remembered it for the seven years he had been abroad. But he had so long looked forward to this moment of homecoming that now it was come it was unreal.

He stood, looking about him, and at that instant saw Wang Ting, his father's chief secretary, and his own sister Siu-li. They were looking in the crowd for him and he now saw them first. He shouted and Siu-li saw him and waved a gay pink handkerchief. She came toward him eagerly, the elderly secretary following her. Martin had not seen this twin sister of his all these years. He had thought of her much and though he had seen many pictures of her he was not quite prepared for this extremely pretty and poised young woman who put out her hand.

"Elder Brother!" she cried in a soft voice. He was older than she by two hours.

"Is this you, Siu-li?" he inquired, unbelieving.

As topical today as when it was written, the present story describes a China resisting alien invaders in her ages-old fashion. The Nobel Prize Winner in Literature in 1938, Pearl Buck, who though an American will always be identified with the China she knows and loves, is best known as the author of the Pulitzer Prize winning novel, THE GOOD EARTH.

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"It is no other, certainly," she replied, smiling. "But here's Wang Ting, too."

Wang Ting came bowing and Martin bowed. He remembered with affection this man who had stood as his father's deputy as long as he could remember. That Wang Ting was here now meant that his father was not. He was disappointed, though he had known his father might not come to meet him. Still, after seven years, and he an only son—

"Is father well?" he asked Siu-li.

He noticed the smallest of hesitations before she answered.

"Yes, he is well. Today it happens he has important business or he would have come."

Wang Ting cleared his throat. "Your father sent every message of welcome by me," he said solemnly. "And he says he hopes you will not delay. There are guests invited for a feast at seven, and it is now nearly half past five. You will want to rest and he will want a few moments at least with you alone."

Wang Ting stepped back, having done his duty.

"Thank you," Martin said courteously.

"Let's go home quickly," Siu-li said with an unexpected petulance. "Wang Ting, you see to his bags and trunks. We will go on."

Wang Ting bowed and took the checks that Martin handed to him. A few minutes later the brother and sister were sitting side by side in their father's car.

They said nothing for a short while. Each was shy of the other, now that they were alone. Though they were fully aware of their relation, still it remained true that they were a young man and a young woman, strange to each other. Then Martin forgot himself.

"I don't remember this road," he remarked. "I thought we used to go to the right."

"We always did until the Japanese came," Siu-li said. "Now we go this way so as to avoid their chief barracks."

"I see," Martin said. He knew that the Japanese had full possession of Peking. Even if his father and sister had not written him of it he would have known it from reading the newspapers in New York, where he had been a student. At first he had expected every letter to tell him that his family had moved away, but as time went on and this did not happen he began to believe that things had not changed so much as he had feared they would. Evidently it was still possible for proud Chinese like his father to live under a Japanese flag, although of course it would be only temporary. It was unthinkable that the Japanese would continue to rule in China. That was why he had come back to China with only a master's degree. His father had urged, indeed, had command-

ed him to remain abroad for two more years at least and if possible longer in order to get practical experience in his chosen field of metallurgy.

"China needs men of the highest training," his father had written.

But Martin, reading in the American newspapers about the way Japanese soldiers were behaving in his country, could not keep his blood calm enough to sit studying.

"I must come back and do what I can now against the enemy," he wrote his father. And without waiting for reply he had drawn his next term's expense money out of the bank and bought a ticket for China. He had expected questions and even trouble at the port; but when he had given his father's name there had been no trouble and the questions had ceased.

"Do the Japanese annoy you on the street?" he asked his sister now.

Again there was that faint but unmistakable hesitation in her answer. Then she said:

"Sometimes—no, not if they know who I am." Her face shadowed. "But I hate them!" she said in a low voice. "I want to avoid them!"

"Of course," he agreed. He was glad to avoid them, too, and he said nothing when the chauffeur drove slowly through small winding alleys instead of the wide main streets of the city.

When the car drew up finally before the gate of his father's home, his throat tightened. He was really home at last!

"It looks just the same," he said, gazing at it.

It was just the same, the wide wooden gates painted vermillion red and set in the thick brick wall and over the wall the old twin pomegranate trees of the entrance court.

"How the trees have grown!" he said.

"Seven years," Siu-li said smiling. "I've grown, too, and so have you."

"Yes," he said.

Then he saw something was changed after all. Instead of the one watchman he had been used to see at his father's gate, he now saw two soldiers, uniformed, their bayonets fixed. They presented arms smartly as he stepped from the car and he was embarrassed.

"What's this?" he whispered to Siu-li when he had returned their salute.

"Father has to have a bodyguard just now," she said in a voice whose quality confounded him. It was angry with scorn.

But she led the way quickly into the gate and there was no time for questions. The first courtyard was full of eager servants, waiting to welcome home the son of the house. Firecrackers exploded and banners waved. He had to speak to all the old ones and to acknowledge the bows of the new. Even

his old wet nurse was there, come in from the country for this day. His mother had died at the birth of the twins, and while Siu-li had her own nurse, Ling Ma had fed Martin and taken care of him when he was too big to suckle. Everyone had expected his father to take another wife but he had never done so.

"But where is father?" he asked his sister when it was over at last.

"He seems not to have come home yet," she replied. She hesitated, then went on. "Why don't you go to your room and change your things? By then surely he will be back."

"I will," he replied.

They stood a moment, he feeling that she was about to speak of something. But she did not. She touched his hand merely.

"It is very good to have you home again," she said and left him.

His own room was not changed at all. Its wide paper-latticed window looked out into his own small courtyard. The bamboos, the pine, were the same. Bamboos attained their growth in a single year and seven years were nothing to the pine, already two centuries old.

"Japan and China," he thought, pleased with his comparison.

The door opened and Ling Ma came, her face all loving solicitude.

"Now, heart of my flesh, you are not to touch anything. I will unpack your garments and fold them away."

"Foreign suits must be hung, not folded, Ling Ma," he said.

"Then show me one and I will do the others," she said. "You must rest yourself, you must eat and sleep and play after all these years of study. You are too thin." She came close and searched his face. "You didn't take a foreign wife!"

Martin laughed at her. "No, no wife!"

She nodded her satisfaction. "Then we must see to it. I will talk with your father myself."

Martin sat down in his foreign easy chair. "I haven't seen my father yet," he said.

"Oh, he's busy—very busy—" Ling Ma said. She had her face deep in one of his trunks. He could only see her stout back.

"I never knew my father to be busy," he remarked. He could say things to Ling Ma that he could say to no one else.

"He's very busy now," Ling Ma's voice came out of the trunk.

A sudden thought struck him. He put it away and then returned to it. After all, it was only Ling Ma.

"He's not getting married again, is he?" The thought was repulsive, but his father was only fifty years old and it was possible.

"Don't ask me!" Ling Ma's voice was suddenly snappish. She came out of the trunk and her face was very red from bending so long. "Don't ask me anything, Young Master! I don't know any-

thing. If anybody asks me anything about this house, I don't know. I live in the country now with my son and I only came back to welcome you home, heart of my body."

He was used to outbursts from Ling Ma, for she was a woman of impetuous temper. Now he hardly knew whether there was truth in his suspicion or whether she was angry because she had been treated in some way she considered unfair. Ling Ma had quarreled often over his father's decrees during his childhood, and it might be her old jealousy against authority over the child in her care.

"Did my father treat you unjustly?" he inquired.

She laughed loudly. "Me, little heart? No, I left this house of my own accord. He even invited me to stay and await your coming. But no, I would not. No, it was nothing he did to me!"

Ling Ma pursed her lips and looked solemn. He was about to put another question to her. Then he decided against it. He did not wish to resume with Ling Ma the old affectionate childish relationship that gave her power over him. He was a man, now. So he said a little coldly:

"That is well, for if he had not given you your due, I should have felt I ought to make amends."

She felt the difference in him and gave way to it at once. "From you I expect only what is good," she said, and then spoke no more, but crept about with her silent solid tread, putting his things right. Then she went away and he was alone.

The house was very still. He had not in years heard such stillness. New York was full of noise, and in its own way, so was the ocean. But this was the stillness of centuries. He felt it around him a protection of strength. What could the enemy do against a great, silent old country?

"They are like swallows attacking a snow-capped mountain," he thought proudly.

At that moment to his astonishment the door opened abruptly, and his father came in.

"Father!" he cried with joy.

"My son," his father replied. He came forward and seized Martin's two hands and held them closely and gazed into his face.

And Martin, receiving that earnest, questioning gaze, felt suddenly shy. Why had his father done so strange a thing as to come to him in his own room? It was not like the austere man he remembered so to step aside from custom. He had been prepared to go to his father when summoned, to stand while his father sat, to answer when he was questioned. But instead here his father was, an eager, even importunate look upon his aging face. He had aged very much. Martin drew back. Instantly his father loosed his hands and the look disappeared.

"Are you well?" he inquired.

"Quite well," Martin replied. He hurried on, anxious for talk. "I hope you are not angry that I disobeyed you, my father. I felt I must come home now—for two reasons. The first is that I want to be of what use I can against the enemy. The second is that I was honestly ashamed to be living abroad in ease and at study as though my country were not suffering."

His father stood looking at him. "I am not angry," he said. "It would be of little use if I were. This generation does what it pleases."

"No, Father, don't speak so," Martin cried. "It makes me feel you are angry!"

His father shook his head. "No, only certain of your misunderstanding," he said in a low voice.

"Father, how can you say that?" Martin demanded. "I am your son!"

But his father only gave him a melancholy smile. "We will see," he said gently. "Meanwhile, it is time for our guests." He glanced at his son's clothing. "What are you wearing?" he inquired.

"What do you wish?" Martin asked, surprised. He had imagined a dinner of old friends, informal and gay, and he had thought with pleasure of a soft silk robe, easy and cool, and which he had not been able to wear for a long time.

"Wear your formal foreign evening clothes," his father said. "And what badges have you? Put on the gold key they gave you, and any other thing you have."

He met his son's stare of astonishment. "I want to be proud of you before my—my friends," he said, and then looked at his watch. "It's late," he muttered and hurried away.

In his room alone Martin dressed himself carefully in his best, stiff shirt, silk vest, tailed coat. He had not worn them since the formal college banquet of his graduation day. He had thought then that he would never wear them again—certainly not in his father's home. More mystified than ever, he put on his Phi Beta Kappa key, and his gold signet ring, and his diamond-studded fraternity pins, one Greek letter and the other the honor society of his profession.

"I have nothing more," he thought. Then he remembered a small pin Siu-li had sent him once in play. It had been attached to the first page of a letter. It was made of silver and enameled in the design of the Chinese flag. Half in fun he took it from the box with his cuff links and pinned it to his lapel.

"Why not?" he thought. "I'm a good Chinese and I'll let the world know it."

He went out of his room, whistling an American tune under his breath. There was no one about, and he sauntered in the direction of the main hall. Then he heard

voices and he hurried his steps slightly. It was half an hour beyond seven but he had not expected anyone before eight. If he knew his China no one came on time to a dinner. The noise now was that of many voices. It sounded as though everyone had come.

He drew aside the red satin curtain hanging in the door and looked. The room was large, but there were many there, between thirty and forty, his eye guessed. And then he saw something else. He could not believe it, but it was true. Three-fourths of the guests were Japanese! Then his father saw him.

"Come in, my son," he said.

There was nothing for him to do except to obey.

"You should have warned me," he said to Siu-li.

He had come straight to her room after the interminable dinner was over.

"What do I know to tell you?" she retorted.

The years they had been parted were vanished. His anger and dismay had demanded frankness between them, and she had expected him. When he went to her court the light was shining like moonbeams through the opaqueness of the rice paper lattice, and he saw the shadow of her head bent over a book.

"You should have told me what people are saying," he replied.

"What are people saying except what they, too, do not know?" she retorted again.

"At least you should have told me that my father has Japanese friends," he said.

"But he has always had friends among foreigners in Peking," she said stubbornly. "And some have always been Japanese. The Baron Muraki has been his lifelong friend and you know it."

Yes, he knew it. When he was a little boy Baron Muraki, even then a kindly, aging man, used to bring him miniature rickshas and animals and tiny fish of gold-washed silver. Nevertheless he said, "No one can have Japanese friends now."

"I have told father that, too," Siu-li said quietly.

"What did he say?" Martin demanded.

"That he had seen too many wars to allow them to change his friendships," she replied.

They looked at each other with the tragic and absolute despair of the young.

"It is such men who will lose our country for us," Martin cried, "and I shall tell him so!"

"You will tell father that?" she cried.

"I'm not afraid of him, any more, not after tonight," he told her. "If you could have seen him, Siu-li, bowing to those strutting little men, the gold on their uniforms like scabs! And calling them carefully by their titles, General This and General That! And

pressing the best of everything on them and watching them grow drunk as though they were doing him a favor. I could scarcely swallow, though I've been thinking for years of eating sharks fins again and spit-roasted duck!" His young face gloomed at her, and she cried:

"Ah, it is hateful, but how can you say anything to father?"

"I can," he retorted. "These are not the times of Confucius."

He strode away on this strength to his father's court. But it was now very late. The rooms were dark around the large silent court where his father lived so much alone. He hesitated and knew he dared not knock in spite of his angry courage.

"I will wait until tomorrow," he thought, and tiptoed away. It would be all the better to wait, he told himself, back in his own room. He could speak calmly and reasonably in the morning. After all, his father was an old man and it was possible that he did not know what he was doing. It was hard to imagine that the keen eyes of his father did not see all that went on before them, but the time must come for him to fail as for all men. He sighed, tried to sleep, and could not until it was nearly dawn. Then he slept long and extravagantly, and it was noon when he was awakened by Wang Ting, standing by his bed.

"Your father commands your presence," Wang Ting said.

And out of old habit Martin leaped to his feet.

What he must remember, he told himself an hour later, in his father's study was that old bonds were broken between a man and his son. What the revolution had begun this war had finished. Everywhere young men and women were telling their parents that their country must come first. "Patriotism is higher than filial duty," they were telling old people who felt themselves deserted.

He struggled against the bonds still strong between himself and this tall, slender, silk-robed man. It was hard to believe so dignified a gentleman had been the one he had watched last night. When Martin thought of this his will hardened. His father had been that man, nevertheless.

"Sit down, my son," his father told him.

He sat down, not cornerwise as he had been taught to sit in an elder's presence but as one man sits in the presence of another. If his father noticed this, he made no sign of it.

"There are many things between us for talk," his father said. "And yesterday I was busy."

"Your time is no longer your own," Martin said boldly.

His father threw him a sharp look. "It is true I am busy," he said smoothly. Something crept over his face like a veil, leaving it expressionless. Against it Mar-

tin suddenly rebelled. The last seven years had been spent among frank and impulsive foreigners, and he would not return to careful speech.

"I shall speak plainly," he told his father. "I was surprised to see our enemies in this house."

"Baron Muraki—" his father began.

But Martin interrupted him. "The Baron was only one of nearly a score."

The look on his father's face grew closer.

"Do you accuse me?" he asked gently.

"I do," Martin said. His eyes were steady upon his father's face. But his father's eyes did not turn either.

"Does it occur to you that I may have my reasons?" he asked.

"There can be no reason, now," Martin declared. Small things he had forgotten were coming back to him. In New York a Chinese classmate had suddenly declined further friendship with him. When Martin pressed him one day with an invitation the young man had said curtly, before he turned away:

"My father does not know your father."

It had seemed foolish then to give as cause against friendship that a Chinese merchant in New York had not known a Chinese gentleman in Peking.

"That can scarcely be expected," Martin had said haughtily and thereafter had ignored the man. Now he understood.

And Ling Ma last night—now he understood her hints.

"Do you know, Father, what people are saying about you?" he demanded.

"I have never known what they say, because I have not cared," his father said calmly.

"You must care now—they are saying you are a friend of the Japanese." He watched his father's face. It did not change.

"I have always had my friends among the Japanese," he said.

"They are saying you are a traitor," Martin rose to his feet.

His father's face did not quiver. "Do you believe them?"

Martin saw curiosity in his look —nothing else. He was suddenly full of angry certainty. Nobody, he thought, had ever known his father well. He had come and gone in this house, a cold and dignified figure whom they had all feared.

"I do not know what to believe," he said.

There was a long pause, then his father spoke:

"You will believe what you want to believe," he said. "That is the habit of the young."

"And is that all you will say?"

"That is all," his father replied.

They were both very angry, and Martin was the more angry because he was less able to control himself than his father.

"I cannot stay in a house where

enemies are accepted as friends," he said proudly.

"Do you mean my house?" his father inquired.

His blandness drove Martin to his last step.

"Yes," he said.

He rushed from the room. He had exiled himself the day after he had come home. Where now could he go? Siu-li must know. She must help him. He went to find her. She was in her courtyard sprinkling small gray orchids in the rocks, her fingers dipping in and out of a pewter bowl she held.

"I have told father I cannot stay," he said to her.

She turned, and the bowl dropped from her hand.

"You have quarreled with him!"

"Yes—forever," he said. "And you must come, too, Siu-li. Only traitors can live in this house. You must come!" he insisted when he saw her face. "I can't leave you if Japanese men are to be allowed to come and go here. But where shall we go?"

She stooped and picked up the bowl.

"I have it already long planned," she said softly. She glanced about the small courtyard. "Twice—I didn't know whether I could stay. There is an old general—did you see him last night? The one with the small white mustache?"

"Yes," he said, and his gorge rose.

"Well, that one—once he saw me, and he asked for me to be brought in." Disgust was dark upon her face.

"Did father send for you?" Martin cried.

"Yes—I didn't know why, or I would not have gone. When I entered the main hall the old general was there."

"But—but—what did father say?" Martin was bewildered. This was not like his father!

"He said he thought modern young women could take care of themselves," Siu-li said. A slight pink rose in her cheeks and she went on. "The truth is we had quarreled the day before, father and I. He did not want me to go to a dance at the Grand Hotel. I wanted to go and I went. So perhaps he was punishing me."

"It was not suitable punishment," Martin cried.

They stood full of a mutual anger.

"We must go," he repeated.

"It could be to the northwest," she said. "I have a friend who knows the way—a girl—soldier."

"Communist?" he asked.

"Guerilla," she amended.

"Where?"

"I can send her a message for tonight. She comes and goes," Siu-li replied. "She is here now in the city. When she goes back we can go with her. She has ways."

He thought hard for a moment. Into the northwest! It was the birthplace of bandits and war lords

in the old days, the stronghold of Communists in the new. He had seen men from the northwest, camel drivers and traveling merchants, soldiers and wandering priests. They spoke with a burr upon their tongues that was foreign to him and they were more foreign to him than the Americans among whom he had lived. And he was loath to leave this home to which he had looked with longing all his years away from it. Life in Peking was easy and beautiful.

"But not now," he thought; and aloud he said, "It may as well be there as anywhere."

Siu-li wavered one moment before she spoke, but only one.

"I also," she said firmly. She looked down and saw the pewter bowl in her hand and in a gesture of recklessness she lifted it up and threw it over the wall.

He was forever after to divide his life into two parts, that before he knew Meng-an, and all that which came to him afterwards. The question which he put to himself often was why he did not at once see her for what she was. But he did not. On the day on which he and Siu-li left their home with her, he saw his sister's friend as a small inconspicuous creature, so like a young boy in her peasant garb that it took faith to believe her a girl. He had seen plenty of girls in America, athletic girls, boyish girls, strongbodied and clear-eyed girls. But one always knew they were girls. Meng-an was without sex, he thought, looking at her again and again, even that first day.

"Though why did I look at her so often?"

She was not beautiful. An earnest face, a square, an unchanging mouth with small full lips, eyes very black and white, short shining black hair, skin as brown as a peasant's and a slim breastless body, carried like the soldier she was, though she wore no uniform now. He said for days of hard journeying, always westward, that there was no allure in this little creature. She seldom talked and when she did she seemed purposely brusque and plain. But though she was small, she was merciless in her strength. She could walk endlessly and ride anything of a beast. Once she leaped astride a farmer's ox as it pulled a wooden cart. And she had refused the motor car Siu-li had suggested bringing the day they started.

"Why trouble ourselves with a machine we can use only for a few miles?" she said scornfully.

He did not at that moment realize all that her words meant. They had left home quite openly one clear summer's day. Each carried a knapsack and no more. Their father never rose until noon, and Wang Ting meeting them at the gate smiled and bowed and said, as he hurried on:

"You have a lucky day for your holiday."

They had looked at each other and smiled behind his back.

"A long holiday," Martin had said.

They had not walked more than half a day before Siu-li was exhausted. The sun grew hot. Meng-an, springing along, cloth shoes silent in the dust, was merciful.

"You will be able to walk more tomorrow," she said.

She kept watching for a vehicle and in a little while she stopped a farmer returning from market with his wheelbarrow empty and asked for a ride. He was willing enough, but when Meng-an bade Siu-li seat herself he was less willing.

"I thought it was to be you, girl soldier," he complained.

"It is the same—she is my friend," Meng-an replied calmly, and so the farmer pushed Siu-li as far as he was going.

"Why was he willing for you?" Martin inquired, curious to know this small creature's power.

"He knows we work for them," Meng-an answered vaguely. "And I pass here often."

Everywhere it was the same. With an assurance that might have been impudent in another, Meng-an asked and was given. Village bakers gave her bread, at teashops she was given a pot of tea, and anywhere a small traveling restaurant keeper stirred up a bowl of noodles and vegetable oil and shook his head when she held out the cash.

"We all work for the country," he would say, a little pompously.

They depended on Meng-an for everything and the more as they came into the northwest where she knew all and they knew nothing. By now Siu-li wore man's clothing that she might walk more freely, and Martin wore peasant's garments, and Meng-an wore the ragged boy's clothing that she always put on when she entered land held by the enemy. They walked until noon, ate, slept by the roadside, and walked again until midnight. This they did day after day until it became the habit of their lives. Every other thing they had once done now grew dreamlike in their memories.

"I wonder if father minds that we are gone?" Siu-li said one day as they rested for a moment.

"He knows why we went," Martin replied.

Meng-an's eyes were upon the bare and distant hills.

"I have not seen my parents for six years," she said suddenly.

"Do you long for them?" Siu-li asked.

"Sometimes," Meng-an said. "Then I remember that if I return to them I return to all the old life —marriage to a man I do not know, a courtyard with the gates locked. And then I get up and go on."

She had never said so much. There was a flicker in her eyes as she spoke but no more. But Martin thought to himself that this

small creature had felt things that he did not know.

"Were you early betrothed?" he asked.

She nodded, but did not speak; he could not for decency ask again.

All these days they had been walking through enemy-held country. Had they been without Meng-an they would have been stopped before this by enemy soldiers. But Meng-an knew how to come and go as a mouse does in a crowded house. Everywhere she was told by someone, a beggar, a farmer, a priest, if there were enemy soldiers near, and then she led them differently, by secret devious ways of her own. Never once did they meet the enemy face to face.

"Though sometimes I do," she told them.

"What then?" Martin asked. He watched her while she answered. Upon that small inscrutable face he was beginning to discern changes, slight to an unseeing eye but vivid to him. This girl could feel.

"I always pretend to be a fool," she said. "Like this—"

By some trick she threw her lower jaw crooked and crossed her eyes and looked an idiot. She straightened herself again.

"Then they let me pass."

"I should think so," Siu-li said laughing.

But Martin said nothing. At this moment he was not sure whether a girl should be like this Meng-an. There she sat, on a side of the dusty road where they had stopped for a rest. Her hair was brown with dust, and dust lay in shadows on her face.

"She is not beautiful," he thought, "though brave."

And then that night they passed out of enemy-held country and into their own. He could feel the difference, or thought he could, even in the twilight air. Certainly people were more free in their talk and their laughter at the inn where they lodged, and there was much boasting of how this one and that had crept in and out of the enemy line. But Meng-an was the most changed of all. When they reached the inn she went into one room a while. A little later she came out for the evening meal. Martin had washed himself and changed his garments. But he was not prepared for what he now saw. A slim young soldier came out of the room Siu-li and Meng-an shared, a soldier in a clean khaki uniform, belted and buttoned and with a small pistol at the waist. It was Meng-an. When she saw him she saluted and gave him the smallest of smiles. It was the first she had ever given him.

"You must go to our general," Meng-an told him. Three days more had brought them to the stronghold of this Chinese army to which she belonged. For three days they had walked among a tranquil people, tilling and work-

ing the land as though war were in another world. Night brought them to the camp itself, when he would go to the men's division and Siu-li and Meng-an to the women's. They halted at the gate of the temple compound where guards stood. Once inside they must part. Thus Meng-an had paused to speak.

"I will see him tonight," she went on, "and when I have given him my secret messages from the old city, I will tell him of you. He will be glad, for he needs men like you."

Now Martin did not want to part from her.

"When shall we see each other?" he said boldly.

The flicker in her eyes he could discern but not its meaning. Was it feeling for him or against him? He did not know.

"There are many meetings for us all," she said, and whether it was promise or evasion he still did not know. And she gave him no time to think. She led the way inside the gate and they were parted. He was given food and a bed and by dark he slept as all slept, because light at night meant oil and oil was money, and money must be spent on bullets for the enemy.

At dawn he rose, called by a bugle, and after food Martin was summoned by a young man so carelessly clothed as a soldier that on the upper part of him he wore a farmer's coat.

"Are you the son of Liu Ming Chen?" he inquired abruptly of Martin.

"How do you know my father's name?" Martin asked.

"We all know it," the man replied.

Martin was silenced by fear. Why should all here know the name of his quiet scholar father in Peking except now as a traitor? He said nothing.

"The general calls you," the man said. "Follow me."

Without hesitation Martin followed and found himself in the doorway of the cave house where the general lived at the back of the temple as many did here, among these high barren mountains. But this room was comfortable with furniture and the floor was rock swept clean. The general was not a fat old man but a young thin-bodied man in faded uniform. No one could have said he was anything more than another, except agile and clever, relentless if he were an enemy.

"One tells me you know metals," he said to Martin without greeting.

That one, Martin knew, was Meng-an. He wondered jealously if she knew this man well and if they were friends. He had missed her already, for when he woke he wondered if today he would see her and how and when.

"It is true," he replied.

The young general looked at him shrewdly.

"You left your father," he said.

"Yes," Martin said. The man knew that!

"Many leave their parents these days," the general said gravely. "Once when I was a child I was sent to a Christian school. In their sacred book I found one day by chance words like this: 'And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.' I who had been taught the doctrine of Wu Wei, I thought, 'How evil are these Christians not to know filial duty!' But the days are come." He paused a second. "I, too, left my parents. We must seek a new foundation for the state, lest we be lost."

The general's accent was not that of a peasant.

"Did you go abroad?" Martin asked.

"Yes—who told you?" the general replied.

"No one—but where?" Martin asked again.

"To Harvard and to Leipzig," the general said.

"And you are here," Martin said. It was wonder enough.

"I would be nowhere else," the general said. He hesitated a moment, and then went on. "Out of these inner regions will come those who will take back the land."

"But do these people know they are being attacked?" Martin asked. "They are so calm and they work in their fields as they always have."

"By day," the general broke in. "By night they put down their hoes and take their guns. But by what good luck you came I cannot say. We lack iron, and there is ore in these hills. The rocks shine when they are split. Is that iron? If it is, I will set about mining it out. It may be silver—and it is not so quickly useful. Do you see your task?"

"Yes," Martin said. He was looking at the seamed side of the cave as he answered. In the rocks was his task. He must find iron to make bullets for the enemy.

"Have you any message for your father?" the general asked abruptly. "Meng-an will start for Peking tonight."

"She goes back?" Martin cried.

"It is her work—to slip between the enemy armies and find out everything and bring me word."

"She told you of my father," Martin said.

The general nodded.

"No, I have no message for him," Martin said.

The general nodded again. "Then you may go," he told him.

He did not see Meng-an again. When he reached his tent six men were waiting. When they saw him they saluted.

"We are to go with you into the hills," they said.

By some means they had with them the few tools he needed—pickaxes, baskets for rock fragments, materials for mapping, and rolls of bedding.

"At once?" he asked.

"It is so ordered," they replied.

"But I must see someone before I go," he protested.

"We will wait a few minutes," a soldier said, "at your command."

"Let it not be longer, sir," another said. "The general does not like delay."

No, he would not, Martin knew, thinking of that firm young figure. He had turned away and at the door of the women's barracks he asked the girl soldier on guard for Siu-li, and was told to wait.

She came a few moments later and quickly he told her his orders.

"And you?" he asked.

"I am to go into training, merely," she said.

"And Meng-an?" he asked, wanting only to hear of her and knowing very well that he knew more than Siu-li did.

"I have not seen her," Siu-li replied.

He knew he should tell nothing he had been told and yet he wanted some communication with that small creature slipping her lonely way among the enemy. He said in a low voice, too low for the waiting guard to hear:

"If you see her today, tell her I said to take care for herself as she goes." And then when he saw the astonishment in Siu-li's eyes he added quickly, "She is more value than you know—to the cause, I mean."

But Siu-li was shrewd with the shrewdness of a woman.

"I was about to ask you now that we are here if you regret coming, but I think I need not," she said.

He laughed sheepishly, feeling himself grow red.

"No, you need not," he agreed.

Weeks passed him, and he spent them day upon day in searching the barren hills. They were not barren, he was beginning to discover. Under their sandy tawny surfaces there was rock and in the seams of the rock, minerals. He walked up the steep beds of mountain streams, his eyes upon every glint and glitter. The men with him were well chosen, for they were men who belonged to the hills, who had spent their youth washing the streams for silver.

"But is there iron?"

"That we don't know, for we never looked for it when there was silver," they said.

In their fashion they had mined some parts of the hills, and they led him to shallow pits they had dug. These he tapped and examined and tested the fragments he chose. There was silver everywhere, but he could not find iron.

"We may have to make our bullets of silver," he thought grimly.

The strange hills surrounded him, and silence was their atmosphere. There seemed no life in

them, and yet sometimes he came upon a monastery built out of sandy rock and seeming in its shape and color so like a cliff that only a gate told the difference. Inside the priests lived, silent so long that they could scarcely speak when he spoke, men whom the mountain winds had dried and beaten upon and bleached until they too were sand-colored. And yet everyone of them when he told them his task, were eager to help him and to show him certain dark ledges they had seen. Everyone of them knew that they had an enemy.

Everywhere they knew. In the night under the endless clear skies and beneath the sharp stars he thought of those who were farmers by day and soldiers by night, and he thought of priests who wanted no peace, and of his sister, who had been so tenderly reared, learning to march long hours and to fire a gun, and most of all and longest he thought of Meng-an making her lonely way in and out among the enemy.

"She has the hardest and most dangerous work of us all," he thought. When he thought of this his bitterness against his father heaped itself up with gall. "He betrays everyone of us."

The filial piety he had been taught he put from him forever, that ancient teaching which had tied together the generations of his people.

"I am no more his son," he thought. And he thought, "We must build a new country, and every generation must be its own lawmaker."

"There is no iron," he told the general.

"There must be," the general said. "Go back."

The hills were bitterly cold now with autumn. The foolish silver was rich everywhere. But the hills held nothing more. He had stayed a month, and then the cold rain had driven him down from the summit. And then it had seemed he must make report of having found nothing. And he knew, too—the long silent nights and the hot moons had told him—that he longed to see Meng-an. Had she come and gone safely? He must know or thought he must. And so he had come down. He had gone at once to Siu-li. But Siu-li was not there. She had been sent the day before with her regiment to a village to the east to make forays by night against an enemy garrison. He was sick with alarm when he heard it, and then dismayed because since she was gone there was no one he could ask of Meng-an. Everyone went about his business here, and it was no one's business to speak of Meng-an. And he had had to go then to the general.

"Go back," the general said now.

And against his look there was no hope of refusal. Besides how

could he say, "I cannot, until I have seen a certain woman," and how could he even say, "I must hear first if Meng-an is safe?"

The general saw his hesitation. "We are still at war," he said. "Why do you delay?"

"I do not."

He went back that same day.

He had lived in the hills so long now that when he thought of cities and of people they were words and nothing more. Had he once seen ships and trains and traveled upon them? Even his memories of them were gone. He had for companions these men as dogged as himself and for his strength his own determination that if there was iron in these hills he would find it. And if he had needed a spur to prod him he had it. One day when in an October as cold as winter where he was, he sat on a rock near a summit eating his bread and salt fish, at noon, he saw even there an airplane. It flew well above the mountain top and yet close enough for him to see it. It was an enemy plane! He could see its markings clearly above him as he looked up at it. It sank a little as though it saw him, then rose and sped on. An enemy plane over these far, inner mountains! He swallowed his food quickly and called his men. They were eating fifty feet below him in a shallow valley. He had climbed out of it to see the hills while he ate.

"Come on!" he cried, and when they were come he said, "We must make haste if the enemy has flown as far as this."

They had worked longer after that, and every day they searched the skies. There were no planes for ten days more, and then eleven planes flew over them like wild geese.

That was the day he found iron. He found it early in the morning, low, near the base of the peak upon which he had spent uselessly nearly fifteen days. He had gone too high. The iron was old, and aeons had driven the deposits deep into the bowels of the mountains.

"Have I been looking too high, everywhere?" he asked himself.

He was so excited by this possible thing that he went no higher. He covered half the base of the mountain by noon and in seven places he found signs of iron, whether it was seven different places or all one great rich vein he did not know. But when he sat down at noon, he ate his bread in such excitement that he could scarcely swallow.

Then it was he heard the planes, and looking up he saw their geese-like passage. The sight might only yesterday have filled him with despair. But today he shook his fist at them and with his mouth filled with bread he shouted:

"We have our bullets for you!"

Now he could go back with good news. He was even glad that

he had found iron in autumn instead of spring. Soon it would be too cold for the enemy planes to fly over the inland, and during the winter months the mines could be planned and made ready. He had long talks about machinery with his men. When he thought of machinery for mines he was troubled. How could they construct and haul and place those great masses? But these men had been miners without such aid. Bamboo and ropes and wooden buckets were their utensils, and Martin listened to them. "A little more than they have had and it will be much," he thought as they went on.

Everywhere through the countryside there were signs of autumn. The harvests were good, and the farmers grew bold to reap them, because few airplanes came now to bomb.

"In the summer we spend half the day in our bomb huts," they told Martin. "Well, it's cool there!" they said, grinning with mischief. "Well, we have had bandits of many kinds," another said. Wherever he went there was no talk of hardship or surrender, only of how work could be done, whether the enemy came or not.

"I wish my father could be here," he thought. "If he saw these people, could he still betray them?"

The thought of his father was like a sore in his heart. Whatever he did, he thought, it would not be enough to atone for his father. And when he thought of Meng-an he asked himself what right he had, the son of a traitor, to think of her.

In this mood he walked the miles back to the encampment and, without asking of his sister or Meng-an, he went, dusty as he was, to report to the general. In his hand he held the fragments of rock and he laid them upon the table.

"I have found iron," he said simply, "and plenty of it." The news was enough of itself.

The general took up the rocks as though they were gold.

"Better than gold," he said. And then when he had examined them he looked up at Martin. "When can you go back?" he asked.

"Today, if you bid me," Martin replied steadily.

But the general laughed. "Now you are taught," he said. "It is the answer I wanted. But you shall not go today. We must make our plans."

"There is not much time before winter comes down," Martin said doggedly.

"Not much, but a day or two," the general said, "and that is long enough for everything. I have news for you. Do you remember my little spy?"

"Meng-an?" Her name flew out of Martin's mouth like a bird from a cage.

The general nodded. "How did

you know her name?" he asked, surprised.

"She brought my sister and me here," Martin said.

"Do you have a sister?" the general demanded of him. "And if you have, why did you not tell me?"

"There was no need," Martin said.

But the general struck a bell on his table. "She must come here, too," he said. "This news is for both of your father's children."

A soldier appeared.

"Go and fetch—what is her name?"

"Siu-li," Martin said. "Of the Third Regiment."

"Surname Liu, name Siu-li, of the Third Regiment," the general ordered. "And tell Meng-an to come also."

"So!" the soldier cried as he had been taught, and saluting he hurried away.

At the mention of his father Martin was afraid. What would the general call good news except that a traitor had been killed? If this was the news he must warn Siu-li first. They must show no grief. He thought quickly.

"Sir," he asked, "may I speak first with my sister? If something has befallen our father, it will be better to prepare her for it."

"Nothing has befallen him," the general replied. He was turning the fragments of rocks over in his hands, dreaming of the precious stuff they held.

So there was nothing to do except to wait.

"Sit down," the general said and he sat down. It was very hard to wait. The general was looking at the rock now through a small hand miscroscope.

Then in a while they heard the light quick tread of feet trained to march, the feet of girl soldiers. The general put down his microscope and looked up. The door curtains opened. Two straight slender girls in uniform stood there. They saluted and stood at attention, Meng-an and Siu-li. Martin smiled at Siu-li and looked at Meng-an. His heart rose on a great wave of pride. These two girls in the old days would have been sheltered, helpless creatures behind a courtyard wall; Siu-li even a few months ago had been in her way useless.

"Is this your sister?" the general asked of Martin, but gazing at Siu-li.

"It is she," Martin said, rising to his feet.

"Be at ease, all of you," the general said. He seemed to have forgotten why he had called Meng-an here. "Be seated," he told Siu-li, without taking his eyes from her face. "I have not seen you before," he said.

Siu-li blushed a little. The uniform, her straight-cut hair, the pistol at her belt, her feet in hard leather shoes, none of these could hide what she was, a soft-eyed girl. Those large soft eyes she now

turned upon the young general as full of coquetry as though she wore a silk robe and had jewels in her hair.

"I did not know you wished it," she said demurely.

"But I do," the general said.

Meng-an looked at Martin. In her eyes he saw that flickering—it was laughter, surely. He smiled to answer it. It was pleasant to communicate thus with her over those other two. Then Meng-an coughed a small dry cough, and the general glanced at her and remembered.

"Ah, you also," he said, but his voice was very different to her. "Yes, and now repeat what you told me. Who told you that the enemy is about to march southward and how we can surprise that march?"

"Wang Ting," Meng-an replied.

"Wang Ting!" Siu-li cried. "But he is my father's secretary!"

Meng-an did not turn her head. She continued to make report, her eyes upon the general's face. "He is sent by his master. Of himself he knows nothing, but his master is in a position to know much and will be as long as his life is spared by the enemy. If they find out he will die. But until that time, I go to a certain small teashop and there I can be told."

All this Meng-an said in her even voice as though what she said was nothing.

"If I had known there was also you," the general said to Siu-li as though she were the only one in the room, "I would have told you at once what your father was. He has been for us since the city fell. Why do you think this little spy comes and goes except to bring me news from your father?"

Now Siu-li turned upon Meng-an. "And you did not tell me!"

"How did I know what you thought of your father?" Meng-an retorted. "And I have my orders against talk about him with anyone," she added.

"And you," the general said to Martin, "you I wanted to try, to see if you were fit to be your father's son. When you did not give up until you found the iron we need, I said, 'He is fit.' "

"You know I doubted my father?" Martin asked slowly.

"Your father begged me in a letter to tell you what he was, when I saw the time was right," the general replied.

They sat, these impetuous two, the modern son and daughter of an old Confucian scholar, and humbled themselves in their knowledge. Then suddenly Siu-li began to weep. She turned to Martin.

"We—we were very unjust!" she whispered.

"Yes," Martin said in a daze, "yes, we were." He thought of his old father in the midst of the comings and goings of the enemy in his house, holding his life as lightly as a toy in his hands, and

he cleared his throat. "I wish we could tell him so," he said.

"I will tell him," Meng-an said calmly.

"Don't cry!" the general said suddenly to Siu-li.

She looked at him, her great eyes dewy with tears and very beautiful.

"How can I help it?" she said piteously. "I have been a wicked daughter. I ought to have known my father couldn't—be what we thought he was!"

"I say you are not to weep any more!" the general shouted. "I cannot bear it," he added in a gentler voice.

And then Martin felt his own eyes caught by someone's gaze, and looked up, and there were Meng-an's eyes, holding his, and this time it was as though their hands clasped. And suddenly his heart inquired, "Is there any reason now?" and then answered itself, "There is no reason."

"Now this is all settled," the general said hastily, "and it is time we went back to our work." His eyes took leave of Siu-li's soft black ones, though unwillingly. "Let us proceed," he said sharply. "Soldiers, attention!"

Martin rose, Siu-li and Meng-an leaped to their feet, saluted, wheeled, and marched out.

The general stared after them and sighed. Then he smiled at Martin.

"You are in love with that little spy of mine," he said.

"How—who—?" Martin stammered.

"Ah, I saw it," the general said calmly. "Well, why not? Everything must go on the same in wartime. Well, you may have my little spy. Tell her so. But she must go on working. We must all go on working."

"Yes, sir," Martin said. He was dazed with the general's calmness over the most enormous thing in the world. Then even as he looked at the general he saw a strange thing happening. Over that firm stern young face he saw a soft sheepish smile appear that turned the general at once into an ordinary young man such as may be seen any spring day in any country.

"Your sister has very fine eyes," he said abruptly.

"They have been so considered," Martin replied.

The general looked startled. "I suppose so," he said unwillingly. He reflected a moment, still staring at Martin without seeing him.

"Why not?" he demanded after a moment.

"Why not, indeed?" Martin replied. "As you said, sir, even in war everything must go on as usual."

They looked at each other for the least part of a moment longer and suddenly they laughed, and then, sharing this laughter in their youth like a cup of wine between them, they laughed again for pure pleasure.

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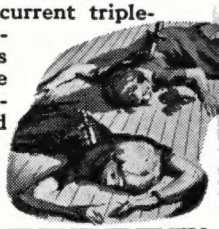

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